Hinglaj Devi

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Identity, Change, and Solidification at a Hindu Temple in Pakistan

JÜRGEN SCHAFLECHNER

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Conventions for Transliteration, Transcription, and Sources

WORDS FROM LANGUAGES other than English, such as South Asian languages (Bengali, Hindi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Urdu), French, or Latin, are italicized. The respective South Asian languages are specified in parentheses also indicating the transliteration system, e.g., *tīrtha* (Hin.), *chaśmah* (Urd.). I have transliterated words for Hindi and Bengali following the conventional system for modern Indo-Aryan languages in Indic scripts (see Das 1983, 66n2). Other languages (Urdu, Sanskrit, Sindhi) follow the guidelines of the Library of Congress (with the exception of "sh" being written as "ś"). All transcripts of interviews in Hindi or Urdu are provided with the Hindi transliteration; a few words that are not found in any common Hindi dictionary are transliterated following an Urdu-Hindi dictionary (Usmani and Kumar 2007). It is possible that the same word may be transliterated in two different ways; the variations may depend on the language and the context (e.g., Hin *siṃdūr*; Sin. *sindūr*). Words from a source language have their necessary English plural form attached and italicized (e.g., *pīṭhas, tīrthas*). *Termini technici* relating to the Hindu faith appear mainly in their Sanskrit base form (e.g., *liṅga, piṇḍa*) except when they are mentioned in an interview or a translation. The transcription of words occurring in paraphrased narratives follows, as in interview transcripts, the Hindi transliteration. Words in the English language appearing in interviews that were conducted in Hindi/Urdu/Sindhi are transcribed in their appropriate American-English form. *Sic erat scriptum* ([*sic*]) is sometimes placed at the end of a complete paragraph or quote instead of following each erroneous word or grammatical mistake to mark more than one error in the preceding text. Films are quoted in the same way as books, and the time code is mentioned (e.g., Schaflechner 2011, 40:40). Narrative accounts summarized from texts follow a synoptic present whereas narratives summarized from oral accounts are written in the past tense. Book titles are provided in italics and, additionally, titles from other languages are transliterated with appropriate diacritics. Words that have been subjected to significant changes

are additionally mentioned in their root form in parentheses, for example, Seeta Koowas (probably from Hin. <*sītā kuāṁ*>). Names of individuals (historic persons or authors), deities, organizations, and places that have found their way into the English language are written without diacritics (e.g., Shiva, Karachi, Brahmo Samaj). Names of various groups and communities are also written without diacritics. Sometimes this diction follows the group's own way of spelling in English. Quotes from interviews and texts in Hindi, Urdu, or Sindhi are written in the transliterated form where more than one interpretation may be possible. Short quotes may be found in-text within parentheses while longer quotes appear in footnotes. All translations in this book are mine if not marked otherwise. A few names have been changed to protect privacy.

FIGURE 0.1 Map of Pakistan. Maps created by Nils Harm, Department of Geography, South Asia Institute, University of Heidelberg

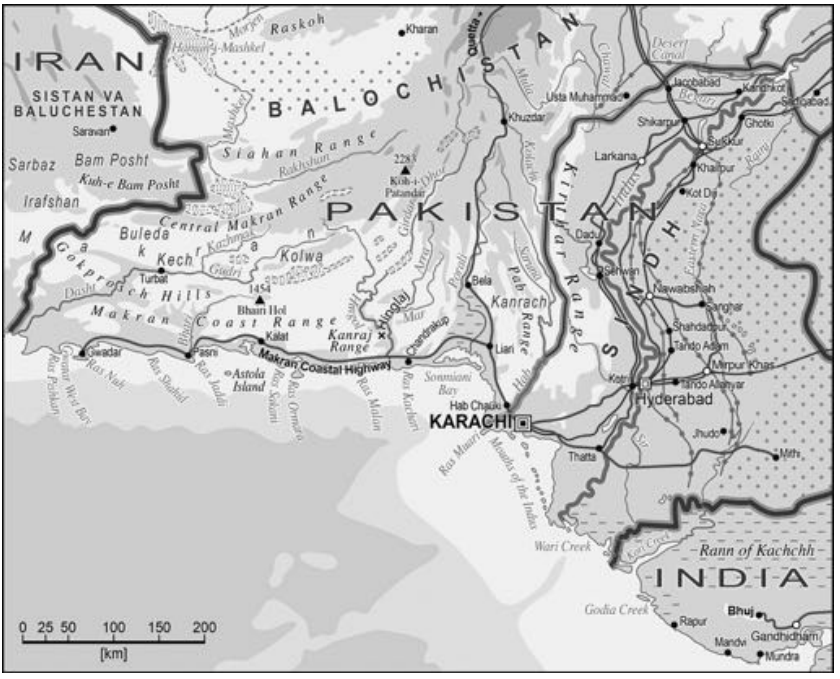

FIGURE 0.2 Map of Sindh and south Balochistan

Introduction

WHAT IS PAKISTANI Hinduism? Or, even more generally, is there anything that can be called Pakistani Hinduism at all? Not much has been published to date about the numerous Hindu communities that exist in today's Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The country's instability, the feudal environment in Sindh—home to the majority of Pakistan's Hindus—or perhaps a simple lack of interest have all effectively kept scholars from inquiring into some of the practices and beliefs of the world's fifth largest Hindu population. An examination of these diverse Hindu groups, encompassing a wide range of castes, ethnicities, classes, beliefs, languages, and many other formative identity characteristics, however, continuously raises new questions that must be addressed.

Today, Pakistan's Hindu community comprises between 6 and 10 million people—an estimate that varies widely according to the source.[1] Of this total number, however large it actually is, the vast majority—over 90 percent—belong to the underprivileged Hindu tribes or sub-castes, such as the Meghvar, the Bhil, and the Kohli, who frequently work as manual laborers for the powerful landowning elite in Sindh. Only a small minority have made a comfortable living in Pakistan for themselves through trade and other professions. This upper-class Hindu elite significantly influences the rest of the community as it provides authors, politicians (such as members of the Pakistan National

1. The National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) states that 1.4 million Computerized National Identity Cards (CNIC) were issued to Hindus in 2012. However, since only a total of 93 million Pakistanis currently possess a CNIC (out of an entire population of over 180 million, according to estimates by the World Bank), this is an incomplete estimate. Furthermore, most members of the Hindu community are landless peasants who often do not possess official documents. The source of the above estimate (6 to 10 million) is the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) in Sindh, which has been operating very closely with the Hindu community for many decades.

Assembly), or, in the case of the temple of Hinglaj in Balochistan, temple committee members who claim the right to speak to and for the rest of the community. Recent decades, nevertheless, have witnessed the increasing emancipation of the unprivileged sub-castes, who have begun to voice their own interests nationally and internationally.

The Hindus of Pakistan represent a variety of sects and faith communities. Many—especially in the rural areas—follow the teachings of local Sufi *pīrs* (Urd. spiritual guide) or adhere to the teachings of the fourteenth-century saint Ramdevji, whose main temple is located in the Sindhi city of Thando Allah Yar. A growing number of urban Hindu youths in Pakistan participate in the westernized and proselytizing ISKCON society. Other communities worship manifold Mother Goddesses as their clan or family patrons, who must be regularly appeased with blood sacrifices. A different branch follows the teachings of the Guru Granth Sahib, better known as the holy book of the Sikhs.

With such dissimilarities in their economic situation, belief systems, and educational background, one may wonder about the coherence of a group that ultimately seems connected merely by a common designation as "Hindu." The longer one's gaze lingers on this diversity, the more any general statement about Hinduism in Pakistan appears to be sheer presumption. In short, Hinduism as an identity marker seems an elusive term that has no beginning and no end, made up only of thriving and ongoing discussions about what it means to be a Hindu in Pakistan. In the present study, this challenge will be taken up using approaches from current political and anthropological theory applied to the data from my intensive fieldwork and textual research between 2009 and 2015.

Belying the prevailing stereotype of Pakistan as an entirely Muslim state, Hindu communities all over the country frequently undertake a variety of religious projects. These flourishing public activities are visible in the recent establishment of numerous Hindu cultural and welfare organizations operating across Pakistan. Such new institutions share an explicit pan-Hindu orientation and thus, differ from the customary *paṃcāyat* (Hin. council) systems, which mainly deal with issues relating to their own village, caste, or sect. Organizations like the Pakistan Hindu Council (established in 2006) or the Pakistan Hindu Seva Trust (established in 2010) appeal to the community as a whole. The Pakistan Hindu Council, in particular, has a distinct political inclination, and its president, Ramesh Kumar Vankwani, is currently a member of the national assembly under the Muslim League government. Through such political and media engagement, these and similar organizations distribute information, organize cultural and religious events, and stage protests concerning human rights issues. In this way, welfare organizations not only help

to represent and describe Hindu life to a larger Pakistani public but also *prescribe* a certain Hindu identity to their own community.[2] This helps to trigger a continuing reflection on what it means to be a Pakistani and a Hindu at the same time. Such a comprehensive approach of speaking simultaneously to a nation state and a religious identity is rather experimental, as most organizations adopting it have been established within the past decade.

Recent decades have also seen the expansion of coverage on Hindu cultural activities and general human rights issues in the mass media. Censorship of Pakistani newspapers was first lifted in 1988 when Benazir Bhutto came into office leading the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) government. In 2002, during the military dictatorship of Pervez Musharraf, the television landscape was further liberalized, and many of the newly established channels started reporting on minority issues. English newspapers such as the *News* (established in 1991) and the *Express Tribune* (established in 2010) regularly cover Hindu festivals and cultural activities. This increase in coverage is especially evident in English print media: while reporting on Hindu activity in Pakistan averaged twenty-eight articles per year between 1987 and 2002 (with a steep increase around the year 1992 when Hindu zealots demolished the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya, causing violent outbursts against Hindus in Pakistan), the years 2003 to 2011 saw an average of a hundred articles annually about issues relating to Hindu communities. The year 2010 witnessed an especially large increase in reporting on minorities following the establishment of the *Express Tribune*.[3] This and similar dailies highlight human rights abuses, including sensitive issues like forced conversions of Hindu women, and so help in bringing minorities' concerns into the limelight. Unfortunately, however, content and emphasis in reporting change according to the publication language. Liberal news coverage often only appears in English and so frequently preaches to an already sympathetic English-speaking upper-middle class.[4]

The abolition of separate electorates in 2002 is another recent change affecting Pakistan's non-Muslim communities, earning heavy criticism from many minorities today due to its weak practical impact. The British Raj originally

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2. This aspect of such Hindu organizations will be discussed in detail looking at the work of the Hinglaj Sheva Mandali in Chapter 6.

3. These figures are from my own study of minority-issue reporting in English newspapers. The survey encompasses the years 1987–2011 and covers the following papers: the *Dawn*, the *News*, the *Daily Post*, the *Daily Times*, the *Nation*, *Business Recorder*, the *Pakistan Times*, the *Frontier Post*, the *Express Tribune*, the *Friday Times*, and the *Start Pakistan*.

4. Coverage in Sindhi newspapers, however, also often tends to have a liberal outlook and a supportive stance on Hindu issues.

introduced separate electorates in 1909 to ensure Muslims greater representation in majority Hindu areas of British India. Governments in Pakistan maintained separate electorates in the years 1956 and 1973, and Zia-ul-Haq rejuvenated the system in 1985. The separate electorates, together with the implementation of the blasphemy laws, created an environment in Pakistan in which political representation became directly linked to religious affiliation (Rais 2007). Under this system, Hindus were only able to vote for a Hindu candidate, which broadly marginalized them in their political activities. With the shift to joint electorates at the beginning of the millennium, Hindus were once again able to vote for Muslim candidates and vice versa. Although minorities are not directly discriminated against during the voting process today, the joint system did not practically increase their political representation.

Over the past forty years, the government of Pakistan has provided progressively greater opportunities for minorities to express a political voice. The 1973 constitution provided the first legal basis for minority political representation in Pakistan: under its terms, 10 seats out of 342 are reserved for non-Muslims in the national assembly, and a variable ratio is retained in the provincial assembly.[5] The Eighteenth Amendment, adopted in 2008, improved non-Muslim representation by adding four more seats for minorities in the Senate. These reserved seats are taken by the minority candidates of their respective political parties. Currently, the Pakistan Muslim League occupies six of the minority seats, while the Pakistan People's Party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement, and the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) occupy one seat each. The most important effect of such political participation has been an increase in government financial support for minority communities, for example, for the restoration or construction of churches, temples, and other community places. This is seen in a wave of restorations of temples across Sindh within the past decade. Since many minority ministers receive funding from the state, the best way to promote their political endeavors is to invest in community places such as temples. While in Sindh, I visited many temples that were renovated within the past decade, coinciding with changes in the political landscape. Notwithstanding such alterations, conversations with many Pakistani Hindus today, however, reveal a harsh criticism of their representatives in the national assembly who, in their opinion, are part of an elite group that has little contact with the communities' fundamental problems.

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5. Currently, the Sindh province has 9 minority seats out of 168 (http://www.pas.gov.pk/index.php/faqs/listfaqs/en/13#q-2), while the Punjab has 8 reserved minority seats out of 371 (http://www.pap.gov.pk/index.php/faqs/listfaqs/en/12#q-2).

Tragically, these examples of increasing political emancipation and articulation of minority concerns must be juxtaposed with dreadful stories of persecution, violence, and a powerless state that is often unable to secure the safety of its non-Muslim citizens. But it is not only the non-Muslim community that suffers under these conditions. At times, it appears as if *everybody* in Pakistan belongs to some sort of minority—from the upper-class residents of the Karachi Defence Housing Authority to the persecuted Hazaras of Quetta; all have understandable reasons to be nervous about their current security situation. One of my interviewees, a Hindu lawyer and a critical observer of Pakistani society, described in 2012 how he views the situation:

> Kidnapping, looting, robbery, killing, stealing, life threats, a lack of security . . . this list could go on and on. These things are not only problems of non-Muslims in Pakistan. These are problems shared by the general public as well. Everyone in Pakistan is insecure—the Sunni, the Shia, the Sindhi, the Mohajir, the Punjabi, the Balochi, the Hindu, the Christian, the rich, the poor—every Pakistani faces these problems. We Hindus are simply no exception.

While I generally agree with this assessment, there are, however, characteristic predicaments that many non-Muslims share, even if they do not appear as hard and fast rules but rather in the form of recurring patterns. Many of these characteristics are linked to the feeling of alienation and treatment as second-class citizens arising out of the overdetermined nexus of religion and citizenship in Pakistan. This point can be illustrated through the Pakistani-Hindu community.

There are many incidents that speak to the complex life circumstances of Pakistani Hindus. In rural areas, for example, wealthy Hindu families are frequently targets of kidnapping and ransom seeking. Hindu girls and women are often abducted, harassed, and forcibly converted to Islam (Schaflechner 2016b, 2017). In March 2014, an attack on a Hindu temple in Larkana, a city in the north of Sindh, paralyzed the entire Hindu community of Pakistan. Rumors had spread that a Hindu man had torn or burned a few pages of the Quran. On the same night, March 15, an angry mob attacked the temple and set it on fire. The rumor of the desecration of the Quran also caused rampage in other cities where Hindu shops were burned down and looted. Only a few days later, on March 28, three men stormed a temple in Hyderabad and set it on fire, likely also related to this case. Another incident followed in Tharparkar two days later. Such cases are typical of instigating communal friction. No proof had been found for the desecration of the Quran, but rumors were enough

for a mob to gather, demolish Hindu property, and demand the death of the alleged culprit.

When I reached Hyderabad two days after the incident, many stories about the alleged event had already evolved. Nobody really knew what had happened, and many were nervous that the violence might also extend to other cities (which it eventually did). Friends at a local nongovernmental organization (NGO) recounted the main rumors: one claimed that the man had moved into a house that had been abandoned by a Muslim family and, in the course of cleaning it, had unintentionally thrown pages of the Quran out into the streets. Another story claimed that the incident followed a robbery in a Hindu household in Larkana. The culprits were found because the robbed Hindu businessman had good contacts in the police. According to tradition in Sindh, the culprits took the Quran and asked the Hindu family for remission. The head of the family refused to forgive them and so the thieves planted some pages of the Quran in his house and alerted local police. One last story claims that debts were involved, which would be abolished by getting rid of the Hindu creditor. Typically, the actual events are not discovered.

While Muslims are also afflicted by the insufferable consequences of an atmosphere of denunciation triggered by the blasphemy laws, alleged desecration conducted by non-Muslim communities often leads to *pars pro toto* actions in which religious identity temporarily becomes a sufficient reason for mob violence to occur. Such *pars pro toto* actions are triggered not only by religious identities, as the manifold and complex cases in the city of Karachi exemplify. Similar incidents are also connected to multiple other identity signifiers including ethnicity, language, class, and so forth. Religious identity is but one such formative characteristic that can attract violence in a given situation. Due to the importance of religious affiliation for some segments of Pakistani society, however, violence relating to religious affiliation does not cease to occur. For this reason, such episodes often affect non-Muslim communities as a whole; examples abound.

But why are non-Muslim communities—in this case Hindus—a particularly vulnerable object for rampaging mobs and organized crime? One answer, at least regarding the rural context, can be found in networks and patron-client relationships (Chaudhary 2008). This is certainly also true for urban spaces, however there, the ramifications of client-patronage ties are more complex than in a traditional rural environment. Kinship relations (within families, villages, or *barādarīs* [Urd. clan, group]) play an important role in such alliances and are often crucial for acquiring jobs, borrowing money for social events (funerals, marriages, etc.), or gaining protection (Chaudhary 2008). Non-Muslim communities frequently lack influential

kinship ties that could protect them from assaults. Such missing networks make many vulnerable to attacks and crime as the culprits do not have to fear consequences from influential patrons. In rural Sindh, in particular, the clan or the *barādarī* serves as a guarantee of security rather than the nation state. Thus, the promise of protection through the implementation of federal laws must be taken with a grain of salt, as practical execution of these guarantees is often not possible in a patron-client environment. A Hindu NGO worker summed up this position well:

> What should we do? Our government is also helpless because there are two kinds of governments in this country. One is the visible, for example the Zardari or Sharif government. But then there is the other, the invisible government, which is controlled by landlords or extremists, who are very powerful here. If the invisible government decides to finish us Hindus here, then the visible government will not be able to help us.

In summary, it can be said that notwithstanding an apparent growing self-confidence among the Hindu population and their increasing political representation, one must also take into account an undercurrent within Pakistani society that causes many Hindus to live a life of anxious caution. Loud celebrations are avoided in many places, for example, and critical talks concerning the religious parties or a negligent government occur only off the record. Religious festivals are held in private, often under police protection. After the spring festival Holi, when Hindus smear each other playfully with colorful powder, many clean themselves of the colors before they step back into the streets so as not to attract antagonism and violence. Thus, the difficulty of producing general descriptions about the Pakistani-Hindu community as a whole, I argue, must be juxtaposed with certain unifying particularities of Hindu (and non-Muslim) life in Pakistan. Some of these peculiarities are better understood through a historical view of Pakistan.

A Historical Predicament

> Within a political structure defining the shape of cultural identity, people are constantly and ineluctably drawn into binary choices. Nation-state ideologies tend to divide the world into Manichaean pairs and to coerce or seduce their citizens into adopting the same rhetoric for the moral organization of their own everyday social relations. (Herzfeld 2004, 15)

The complex link between Pakistani citizenship and Hindu identity has its roots in the two-nation theory (Urd. *do qaumī naẓariyah*), later also accentuated in the Pakistan ideology (Urd. *naẓariyah-i pākistān*). This founding myth, central to the Islamic Republic, claims that Muslims and Hindus are two distinct nations that can only thrive through their separation, and ultimately led to the partition of the subcontinent in 1947. Today, however, we know that the movement for Pakistan (Urd. *taḥrīk-i pākistān*) was not a straightforward development or the manifestation of a clear demand for a separate Muslim homeland (cf. Shaikh 2009; Jalal 1995; Talbot 2012). Notwithstanding the actual complexities behind the events that led to the Partition, the simplified notion of an incommensurability of Muslims and Hindus is widely disseminated in South Asia today and often serves as the main explanation for the separation of the subcontinent. Citizenship built on this notion of the two disconnected nations forcefully hyphenates nation and state under a hegemonic religious signifier. Nation-state identity in Pakistan, for example, evolved according to an ideology that equates being Pakistani with being Muslim. This development required the exclusion of some for the unity of many. Farzana Shaikh consequently argues that the very existence of minorities inside the country constantly contests the two-nation theory and the understanding of who is a "real" Pakistani (Shaikh 2009, 69). It is this precarious historic foundation that impacts the everyday life of many Hindus in Pakistan.

An Everyday Predicament

The propagation of this two-nation theory as Pakistan's creation-myth requires wide institutional support. Louis Althusser, a French Marxist, termed institutions that help to disseminate such ideologies "ideological state apparatuses" (ISA) (Althusser 1971). According to him, religious institutions like churches as well as education centers such as schools are typical ISA as they reproduce "relations of production" (Althusser 1971, 154). Althusser's work on state institutions can be helpfully applied to the case of Pakistan. Here, the educational ISA do not primarily reproduce relations of production as it is found in Althusser, but rather aim to sediment differences between Muslims and Hindus, which serves as a legitimization of the very existence of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Within such discourses, Hindu India is frequently demonized to attest to the necessity of the Muslim homeland. I found government schoolbooks to be one of the most persuasive examples of such a structural exclusion of Hindus as part of the state ideology.

National and international scholars working on education in South Asia have found that in Pakistani schoolbooks, India and "the Hindu" are often portrayed as threats to the Pakistani nation state (cf. Aziz 1993; Lall 2008; Rahman 2011). Since textbooks frequently emphasize that Pakistan is a Muslim nation, this threat to the country also becomes a hazard for a shared Muslim identity.[6] "The Hindu" therefore is not only a danger to national security but "has always been an enemy of Islam."[7] In addition, references to India such as "Bharat is the country of non-Muslims"[8] intentionally omit the millions of Muslims living in India. Such texts often also leave out the historical role of Hindus who supported the demand for Pakistan's establishment, or Muslims who were against it, for example, Abdul Aʿla Maududi, the founder of the political party Jamaat-e Islami. Such omissions enable children to draw a seemingly clear line of identity between "us" and "them" consistent with the two-nation theory (Saigol 2005, 1010). Such fantasies of the neighboring country are easily projected onto the Hindu minorities inside of Pakistan, and, thus, their integration into the public sphere as Pakistani Hindus seems anomalous, especially since schoolbooks suggest, through synecdoche, that the habits of some Hindus are the habits of all Hindus. Thus, although the government has taken steps to safeguard minorities, significant changes on the part of state apparatuses are still required to destigmatize the country's Hindu communities; one of these changes would certainly be revising Pakistan's schoolbooks.

The demonization of Hindus and India, however, is not only shown in Pakistan's government schoolbooks. We also find such images in the country's popular culture, for example in the widely spread genre of Urdu pulp fiction. The monthly horror magazine *Dar Digest* (Urd. *Ḍar Ḍā'ijasṭ*) serves as a clear case in point in this regard. *Dar Digest* is based in Karachi and has a circulation of around 10,000 to 11,000 copies per month. Frequently, its benign lurid tales carry similar messages under their vulgar content which, in the end, repeats the incommensurability of Hindus and Muslims by anxiously retelling the story of the not only misguided but also demonic Hindu. A short

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6. See class II Urdu textbook: "Our country is Pakistan. We live in our country. Pakistan is an Islamic country. Here Muslims live. Muslims believe in the unity of Allah. They do good deeds" (cited in Nayyar and Salim 2005, 11). The national curriculum for English (2002) for class XI and XII reads: "To educate and train the future generations of Pakistan as a true practicing Muslim" (Nayyar and Salim 2005, 11).

7. "*Hindū hameśah se islām kā duśman rahā hai*," Urdu class V, Punjab Textbooks Board, Lahore 2002 (see Nayyar and Salim 2005, 20).

8. From an English textbook for class III (cited in Aziz 1993, 166f.).

summary of one of its stories called *Duśmanī* (*Hostility*; Shaikh 2014) from May 2014 may exemplify this.

> We enter the story in the midst of a demonic ritual, with a human body laid out on a table, naked and with an open chest, the heart still pounding through the wound. Dr. Shankar, who is responsible for this fiendish scene, is satisfied with the heart and compliments Nirmala, his "lady assistant," and his other henchmen for their work (p. 131). The heart is put into a jar and then taken to a tantric, Ram Lal Das, who is also pleased about the quality of the organ (p. 133). It is the eleventh heart that Dr. Shankar has cut out of unnamed male victims, and we learn that he and his team of scheming surgeons have now completed their contract with Ram Lal Das. As payment for this bloody agreement, Ram Lal Das gives Dr. Shankar a mantra that will supply the superstitious doctor with the power to control other peoples' minds. Though his lady assistant is skeptical—a quality, we learn is deemed inherent in the female character—the mantra really does work, and Dr. Shankar is able to enter the mind of a young fellow who sits with his friend in a restaurant (p. 134f.). Instigating turbulence between the two, which ultimately ends in a physical fight between the friends, Dr. Shankar has proven the efficacy of the magic words given to him by Ram Lal Das. Pleased, Dr. Shankar now reveals his evil plan to his lady assistant Nirmala, who, as we will learn, is excited more than just professionally about the doctor's evil abilities. After Dr. Shankar makes sure that his simpleminded lady assistant knows what aliens are, he explains that with the help of the mantra acquired from Ram Lal Das, he will create an army of man-machines with the power to fight the space aliens (p. 137). With the support of the Indian government, he intends to shoot a rocket into the cosmos for the sake of finding and killing them all (p. 138). Dr. Shankar's victory over the aliens would ensure him the power to rule space—thus putting American and Russian astronautic ambitions in their place. Furthermore, Dr. Shankar plans to use his galactic supremacy to help India become the new superpower on the globe. Nirmala, who is very impressed by the doctor, nonetheless inquires if his plan might not be a bit too ambitious, which prompts Dr. Shankar to sneer at religion and the concept of God, whom he deems as a mere human creation (Shaikh 2014, 138).
>
> In the next scene, the story jumps to Dr. Shankar's last preparations for the space launch. Having acquired twenty men with the help of Ram Das' evil mantra, he transformed them into man-machines with the ability to breath outside of Earth's atmosphere. At this point, Dr. Shankar is completely convinced of his imminent success. Suddenly, the door to his

demonic laboratory, where he works with his sinister entourage, bursts open and a white-clad figure with a long beard enters the room.

> *"Stop, Dr. Shankar!" A deep manly voice was heard. Dr. Shankar, Nirmala, and Mohan [another of Dr. Shankar's helpers] turned around. An old man with a radiant face and a white beard stood at the laboratory's entrance door. He was wearing a long white dress and had prayer beads in his hand. (p. 139)*

We learn that this is Baba Abdulla, a pious Muslim man who had witnessed the scene in the restaurant and after that had decided to kill the evil, mind-controlling Dr. Shankar and his servants. But Baba Abdulla has not come alone. He has brought a gang of ghosts with him—all from pious descent as he mentions (p. 140). A fight begins in which the sinful bunch—Dr. Shankar, his lady assistant, and their helpers—are ultimately killed by the pious spirits. Baba Abdulla saves the captured and mutilated men, who, as we learn, come from Muslim, Christian, and Hindu backgrounds. After their release, Abdulla takes them to the next bus stop, and they return to their respective home towns.

Duśmanī is a characteristic example for how Hindus feature in such and similar Urdu horror tales in Pakistan (Schaflechner 2016a). The story uses a wide set of genre-typical tropes including power-hungry Hindu villains, black magic, and pious Muslim saviors.

Embodied in the figure of Dr. Shankar—the megalomaniac, atheist supervillain—we find the quintessential image of the untrustworthy and simply evil Hindu. In *Duśmanī*, this also extends to India as a nation as it is the silent supporter of Dr. Shankar's insidious plan, facilitating the mad scientist's rocket launch. In exchange for this support, Dr. Shankar promises to turn India into a superpower on the globe, even surpassing Russia and the United States (p. 138). India, thus, emerges as a cunning nation, which is conniving with an evil scientist and a tantric to gain world domination.

Duśmanī's main conflict emerges as nothing less than a struggle of good against evil. Black magic, gained from the brutal murder of the innocent and executed by the Hindu doctor, versus an army of pious spirits under the command of a saintly figure. These structures abound within the genre, and—with few exceptions—can be seen as the main characteristic of stories that feature Hindu characters (Schaflechner 2016a).

Such examples show that being a Hindu in Pakistan today means to be split between one's religious affiliation and one's loyalty to the nation state. This schizophrenic relationship between the Hindu minorities and the Pakistani state is not only visible in governmental textbooks or popular culture but also performed at times when Hindus speak publicly to and for their community. Such events are most often accompanied by an emotional outburst of patriotism

and love for Pakistan. Very frequently speeches begin and end with "Long live Pakistan" (Urd. *pākistān zindābād*) or a little anecdote that shows the dedication of individuals, or indeed the whole Hindu community, to the Islamic Republic. National celebration days like Independence Day on August 14 are frequently used by Hindu organizations to show the community's loyalty to the state. This includes, for example, highly publicized marches in Karachi to the mausoleum of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, or staged political protests.

Due to a host of factors, thus, including the absence of patron-client relationships, the structural exclusion of Hindus within the governmental education system, their demonization in parts of popular culture, and the very foundation of the two-nation theory itself, the Pakistani-Hindu identity exists in a kind of purgatory, caught betwixt and between. Furthermore, while Hindu life in the Islamic Republic is encountering a variety of problems, Hindu migrants to India also face extreme difficulties after their migration. This time it is not their religious identity, but their Pakistani heritage that causes them to be eyed with suspicion by their environment (Schaflechner 2014). This marginalizes many Pakistani Hindus on both sides of the border.

A Hindu Shrine in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

The present study looks at Hindu practices within the Islamic Republic of Pakistan today through an in-depth analysis of the Hinglaj shrine and its ritual journeys in Balochistan. This approach will show both how Hindu cultural practices flourish in Pakistan today and also how they need a certain environment—such as Hinglaj—to thrive. As we will see in the course of this book, the site's power to attract various castes, classes, and ethnicities also stems from its unique geographical position, which is on the one hand sufficiently distant and on the other close enough to urban settlements in Pakistan to house a free and unfettered Hindu religious practice. In this way, notwithstanding that this study is centered on the rituals and narratives of one particular site located somewhere in the far-off desert of Balochistan, its recent developments reveal much about the Hindu communities of Pakistan.

In the subsequent chapters, I will evaluate the various possibilities to engage with the empirical material collected for this book. Due to the shrine's new accessibility paired with its recent institutionalization, many formerly disconnected practices and narratives started to meet on a regular basis. Doing fieldwork at the site together with engaging with a variety of texts and other media confronted me with the question of how to organize all of these voices that uniformly claimed to speak the truth about the shrine and its annexed

practices. Chapter 1 will elaborate on the theoretical foundations of this work through a concept I have called "the solidification of tradition." Utilizing newer anthropological theories of ontology and supplementing them with the political philosophy of post-foundationalism will help me to produce my own engagement with the various truth-claims encountered during my research.

The second chapter presents three distinct strains of the Goddess's history, corresponding to the three main historical discourses shaping the current representations of Hinglaj and the ritual journeys relating to her. The first surveys the various mentions of Hinglaj Devi in ancient Sanskrit sources, including her compelling link to the myth of the Goddess Sati. The second history presented demonstrates how Hinglaj rose to her role as an important caste and clan Goddess for contemporary South Asian Hindus. This historical strain explains her significance for communities such as the Charan, the Brahmakshatriya, and the Kapri, showing how efforts to pin the shrine to a distinct historical era are utilized for modern-day political claims. The third history outlined in chapter 2 provides a glimpse into how the shrine's Zikri-Muslim history has transformed the Goddess into a representative of communal understanding between Muslims and Hindus in today's Sindh. It further explains how the veneration of Hinglaj as the *pīr* "Bibi Nani" within certain Muslim traditions allows her to exert considerable power within modern-day Sindhi nationalist discourses. Laid over this threefold genealogical approach is an overview of the recent infrastructural and other developments at and around the shrine and their effect on each of these historical narratives, including the recent emergence of the Lasi-Lohana caste, a local community based around the shrine, as a new and powerful actor in the process of writing and rewriting the history of Hinglaj.

Chapter 3 introduces the tradition of ritual journeys and sacred geographies in South Asia, and then hones in on a detailed history of the grueling and elaborate pilgrimage attached to the shrine of Hinglaj. Before the construction of the Makran Coastal Highway (MCH)—the highway that coincidentally linked Hinglaj to the outside world—the journey to the Goddess's remote abode in the desert of Balochistan frequently presented a lethally dangerous undertaking for her devotees, the hardships of which have been described by many sources in Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Sindhi, and Urdu. The chapter draws heavily from original sources, including travelogues and novels, which are supplanted by local oral histories in order to weave a historical tapestry that displays the rich array of practices and beliefs surrounding the pilgrimage and how they have changed over time. This overview includes a discussion of the 1957 Bengali novel *Marutīrtha Hiṃlāj* (*The Desert Pilgrimage to Hinglaj*) by the author Abadhut (in Hindi translation [1964]), contrasting its representation

of the trek to Hinglaj with that found in Devadatta Shastrī's 1977 Hindi novel, *Āgneya Tīrtha Hiṅglāj* (*The Fiery Pilgrimage to Hinglaj*). The chapter goes on to compare the oldest of the available sources on Hinglaj—some of them dating from the nineteenth century—with documentation produced after the turn of the new millennium. This comparative analysis demonstrates how certain motifs, such as austerity (Hin., Skt. *tapasyā*), remain important themes within the whole Hinglaj genre even in modern times, while others have been lost in the contemporary era. The contrasting of sources also serves to show how newer publications by devotees from India display a pronounced political inclination, distinguishing them from the more dominant sense of spirituality and self-abandonment found in the older texts.

Against this backdrop of the ritual journeys historically linked to Hinglaj, Chapter 4 uses modern-day case studies and extensive fieldwork to depict the current situation for those undertaking the pilgrimage. The presentation of this study shows how the construction of the MCH brought with it not only the modernization of transportation to the shrine, but in contrast also a renaissance of the walking practice to Hinglaj. The case study of a group of Hindu pilgrims from Narayanpur, a multireligious and multi-ethnic area in Karachi, shows how "traditional" pilgrimage practices are reinterpreted—or even retrospectively invented—to adapt to modern circumstances. A survey of these practices demonstrates how the infrastructure that developed along with the MCH, such as easier access to water sources and a reduced chance of becoming lost in the perilous desert along the way, have together led to a revitalization of walking patterns and to new interpretations of the concept of austerity (Hin., Skt. *tapasyā*). The chapter utilizes a second case study of a group of Gujarati pilgrims from India to show the situation for Hinglaj devotees on the other side of the border whose path to the Goddess contrasts starkly with that of their Pakistani counterparts. While Hinglaj devotees in Pakistan today can easily experience her shrine, due to the challenges and costs of obtaining a visa, her worshippers in India must often still rely on texts, videos, or the accounts of the few who have had the chance to cross the border for the ritual journey. Thus, the prestige and exclusivism surrounding the pilgrimage to Hinglaj, having all but disappeared in Pakistan following the construction of the MCH, is still very much alive in India, where devotees who successfully clear the bureaucratic and financial hurdles needed to undertake the journey enjoy a special status within their communities. The case study also shows how stereotypes linked to Pakistan play a significant role in the "mystification" of the pilgrimage across the border, in India, and how such visions of the Islamic Republic serve to bolster the shrine's symbolic capital. The latter part of this chapter discusses how the recent developments around Hinglaj

have exposed a gap between the traditional discursive representations of the pilgrimage (Chapter 3) and the current practices at the shrine (Chapter 4). To reconcile the traditionally austere image of the shrine with its modern-day accessibility and popularity, visitors and organizations have adopted new strategies to explain the changes it has undergone in recent decades and the corresponding wellspring of newfound interest in the formerly aloof Balochistan temple. These strategies are largely represented in the spreading notion of the "*picnic manānevālā*" (Hin/Urd. the "picnicker"), a derogatory designation applied by devotees to those shrine visitors they see merely as "tourists," unlike the pilgrims of widespread oral traditions and publications who risked their lives crossing a harsh desert to reach the Goddess's dwelling place.

Chapter 5 elaborates upon the evolution of the pilgrimage and maps the process in recent decades that has gradually claimed Hinglaj Valley and the shrine as Hindu religious space. The chapter begins by setting forth a detailed analysis of the various resting places, ritual activities, and mytho-historic narratives found on the pilgrimage to Hinglaj in order to show how such *paṛāv* (Hin. halting/resting places) have transformed in recent years. Using colonial sources, travelogues, and my own ethnographic material from Sindh and Balochistan, the chapter also offers a comprehensive study of the *sanctum sanctorum*, the main image of the Goddess inside the temple, and how it has been physically manipulated by Hindu renovators in order to minimize visual impressions suggestive of the (Zikri-) Muslim tradition, a manifestation of the general "hinduization" in recent decades at the shrine. Applying the theoretical work of Henri Lefebvre, this chapter goes on to show how spatial practices, conceptual forms of spatial knowledge, and religious imaginaries are intertwined at Hinglaj and how an alteration in one of these moments influences the other two. On the basis of a few ethnographic examples, the chapter demonstrates how both man-made and natural material alterations in the past, such as renovations or landslides, led to new narratives and ritual practices at the shrine.

By exploring the features of the most important annual religious festival at Hinglaj, Chapter 6 reveals how one local community's version of Hinduism became hegemonic at Hinglaj and has today become practically synonymous with the "real" or the "actual" tradition of the Goddess. Mainly using my own extensive ethnographic material, this part describes how the increasingly plural religious landscapes at Hinglaj—seen in the vast crowds the festival attracts from a wide range of castes, languages, ethnicities, and nationalities—has led not to a democratization of interpretation of the shrine's various traditions but rather to an imposition of a particular interpretation favored by the local Lasi Lohana community. Thanks to the vast institutional network

attached to the temple committee—largely composed of Lasi Lohana group members—Lohana practices at the temple have been framed and disseminated in a way that suggests their association with broader notions of progress and education. This narrative has allowed the temple committee to appeal to Hindus from a wide variety of backgrounds and perpetuate its own understanding of appropriate and "correct" practices at the shrine. Furthermore, it engages with the dynamics of one particular practice—animal sacrifice (Hin. *bali*)—at Hinglaj to demonstrate how the understanding of this tradition has been shaped by the dominant narrative. Even though many historical sources show that *bali* once represented a significant component in the pilgrimage to Hinglaj, the temple committee recently imposed a blanket ban on all animal sacrifice in the valley, labeling it a non-Hindu tradition. Although the ban on *bali* at Hinglaj may have originally been triggered by a host of organizational and infrastructural problems relating to the practice, through effective dissemination of its message, the temple committee has created an understanding of the prohibition as animated largely by the concept of "actual" Hindu behavior.

The conclusion harmonizes the overarching themes of the book, providing a final look at the dramatic relationship between identity, change, and solidification for Pakistan's largest religious minority at its most important place of worship today. Summing up the work's main findings, I will conclude with a prospective look at the future of Hindus in Pakistan and the gaps that remain to be addressed in the field of area studies and anthropology.

1

The Struggle Over Truth

HINGLAJ DEVI IN Balochistan has come to be one of the most important centers for Hindu spiritual practice in Pakistan over the past three decades. It will be our launch into the study on Hindu traditions in the Islamic Republic. Before analyzing the intriguing dynamics connected with the shrine and its history over the past decades, however, I need to clarify a few theoretical and methodological concerns that emerged out of my empirical material.

The tradition's relatively recent dislocation—triggered (among other reasons) by the less arduous access—kindled a process in which many actors involved with the shrine started to reshape the various rituals and narratives at the site. During the course of this process, certain practices at Hinglaj became labeled as the "real," "true," or "proper" ways to engage with the Goddess, whereas others were termed as "fake" or "notional." In this book, I call these intricate dynamics of inclusion and exclusion "a solidification of tradition," and one of my major goals is to utilize this concept for my case study. In order to elaborate its theoretical foundation, I start with the question for which the concept of solidification could be an answer: How is it possible to organize a field of voices in which everyone lays claim to speak "the truth" about the Goddess Hinglaj?

1.1 Truth-Claims

For centuries, the shrine of Hinglaj was famous for being extremely difficult to reach. Its location in the arid desert of Balochistan, far away from any urban settlements, made the journey exceptionally demanding. Many reports document the deaths of pilgrims either coming to or returning from the shrine. Its remote location is also partially responsible for the fact that no single prevailing narrative evolved over time. The scarcity of pilgrims over the years, the comparatively small amount of written documentation, and the various

languages (and scripts) involved in the recording of travelogues, oral accounts, or rituals at the shrine hindered a coherent single tradition from emerging. Many different communities documented different kinds of mandatory rituals, routes, and places on the way. In short, various types of "true," "actual," and "proper" practices and beliefs arose.

This situation changed rapidly after 1986 when a temple committee, the Hinglāj Śevā Manḍalī (HSM),[1] took over the organization of the pilgrimage and started to deal with these different histories. The construction of a highway at the beginning of the new millennium (which happened to connect the isolated shrine with urban Pakistan) further added to these changes. The temple's location, although far from any urban environment, was now comfortably reachable by car, and as a result, after 2001, the site quickly developed into a stage for one of the biggest annual Hindu festivals in Pakistan.[2] Attracting thousands of people from all castes, classes, and regions, this new accessibility caused views from all kinds of traditions to come together, and these needed to be organized, judged, and articulated anew. Hence, the current struggle over the prevailing, or hegemonic, interpretation of the shrine is directly linked to its significant infrastructural changes.

With the site's increasing publicity, growing numbers of actors (individuals and institutions) claimed authority to define what, according to them, constitutes the tradition's core practices. Such efforts to single out the only right interpretation, naturally, include the rejection of other peoples' opinions. These politics of exclusion are clearly illustrated, for example, in the practices during the—relatively recently established—annual festivals at Hinglaj Devi, but they are also conspicuous in publications about the shrine appearing in Urdu, Sindhi, Hindi, and Gujarati.

Many opinions I found about the shrine and the residing Goddess made it clear that for devotees, there is a "real" or "authentic" Hinglaj, which simply has not been correctly understood by others. Devotees generally understand the place as a source of ancient and uniform wisdom with clear boundaries regarding proper and improper practices. For the Goddess's followers, the accurate performance of these practices also determines how much spiritual

1. This name is transliterated from the Urdu script, which uses *śevā* instead of the more commonly used *sevā*, and will from here onward not be given in its transliteration. I will also often use the shortened form, "HSM."

2. Even though an official of the Islamabad-based Jinnah Institute branded Hinglaj in 2012 as a "high risk for catastrophe" due to a possibility of extremist attacks, it is one of the few places in Pakistan that offers a relatively secure public space for a massive Hindu festival to occur.

merit (Hin. *puṇya*) they eventually will receive from the divinity. For some, as I will show later, a visit at the shrine is very significant, having the power to influence this life and the afterlife.

In many of the sources I analyzed, whether written or oral, claims about Hinglaj were often introduced with words such as the "real," the "actual," or the "proper" meaning of the tradition. Many authors and interviewees sought to point out some "true" practice at the shrine or an "actual" story behind certain events. In the following, I will call such references, which define what Hinglaj *is* through exclusion, that is, through what Hinglaj *is not*—"truth-claims." Such truth-claims are an important characteristic of many (learned and/or devoted) opinions on Hinglaj. The buttress of this discourse can be exemplified by a 2010 interview with a Pakistani-Hindu devotee in which he describes the origins of the Hinglaj pilgrimage.

> People back then were afraid of ghosts, evil spirits, and such things at Hinglaj. They did not understand. The *real* [*xālis*] books on the Goddess were not translated yet and we could not understand Hindi or Gujarati, so that we could get *proper* [original in English] guidance. So people started to translate the *proper* [original in English] texts into Sindhi and Urdu, and people were encouraged to go to Hinglaj. (italics added)

While the development of the ritual journeys to Hinglaj will be an ongoing topic, at this point, I want to pay attention to the interviewee's usage of the words "proper" and "real." Ghost possession and the handling of evil spirits (both common occurrences among many Hindu communities in Pakistan) are excluded by this devotee as "improper" parts of the tradition, while assessments about the shrine found in "real" Hindi and Gujarati texts are taken to be what is "proper." This conspicuous struggle about a tradition's core practices and narratives is certainly not particular to the tradition of Hinglaj alone but, undoubtedly, has been accentuated due to recent disruptive (and constructive) events involving the shrine.

Let me now return to this chapter's initial question: How is it possible to organize a plurality of overlapping—but also opposing—truth-claims visible in myriad interviews, texts, or videos? To deal with this issue theoretically, I will look at two schools of thought and their contribution to theorizing fieldwork. First, I will engage with the so-called ontological turn, which promises a novel approach to a multitude of truth—or ontological—claims. In a second step, I will engage with the discipline of "post-foundationalism" to emphasize how such claims are produced through hegemony and political struggle.

1.2 The Ontological Turn

Anthropologists have in recent years given new scholarly attention to questions of ontology (Viveiros de Castro 1998; Descola 2010; Carrithers et al. 2010). This surge of interest has largely been guided by a rejection of theories of cultural representation and the wish to engage with otherness in ways that leave "the other" as undistorted as possible. Taking difference and such "conceptual self-determination" (Viveiros de Castro 2003) seriously, some argue, calls for a shift from epistemology to matters of ontology (Holbraad 2009, 81). Anthropology, seen as a discipline concerned with forms of difference, needs to be the center of a change in perspective, turning from culture and its representations toward ontology and the acknowledgment of multiple worlds. In other words, instead of claiming the existence of one singular nature, which is differently interpreted by various cultures, ontological anthropologists uphold the notion of multiple worlds—or multiple ontologies.

This shift in perspective does not lead to a uniform body of theories. Rather than supplying the readers with a coherent corpus of core assumptions—and in this way maybe similar to other turns before—the ontological turn encompasses a wide set of approaches including references to concepts of performativity (Law and Lien 2013), rhizomes (Deleuze and Guattari 2005), and theories of actor-networks (Latour 2005). This conceptual variety, together with alternate understandings of its key term "ontology," has caused many—critics and supporters alike—to doubt that the ontological turn can actually be defined as a systematic school of thought (Course 2010, 248; cf. Kelly 2014; Lynch 2013; Carrithers et al. 2010). Due to its richness in theories, but also due to spatial constrains, I cannot provide a comprehensive overview of the debates concerning the so-called ontological turn, but instead I will focus on two of its core assumptions—first its engagement with information from the field at eye-level and second the concept of multiple ontologies. I consider both important for the theoretical and methodological foundations of this work.

As already mentioned, one of the main arguments of the ontological turn within anthropology is, as Latour famously called it, its attempt to keep the discipline "symmetrical." This idea had developed out of an anthropology, which had turned its interest from traditional cultures toward the production of scientific truths (Latour 1983, 1999, 2005) and triggered an approach to fieldwork, which attempts to "take others and their real difference seriously" (Candea in Carrithers et al. 2010, 175). That is, ontological anthropologists wish to "describe the ontologies of non-Western peoples without recourse (or with as little recourse as possible) to our own ontological assumptions" (Course 2010, 247). Applying symmetrical anthropology means to use notes from the

field as opportunities for the creation of new theories (Henare, Holbraad, and Wastell 2007, 1). They further argue that deducting theoretical patterns out of informants' practices also shows alternate theories and ways to engage with the world. This certainly is not new to the discipline (Henare, Holbraad, and Wastell 2007, 4) but has—according to Holbraad—gained novel importance due to the proliferation of anthropological theories and "'in' catchphrases" whose analytical contribution is not completely clear (Holbraad 2009, 81). This aspiration to take "difference seriously" and the idea that discussions of otherness need to be located at the ontological level now leads to the concept of multiple ontologies.

Proponents of the turn in anthropology claim that for understanding multiplicity and various degrees of alterity, an ontology surpassing epistemology has become necessary. Woolgar and Lezaun (2013, 322) capture this when they write about the turn's basic foundations as an

> effort to circumvent epistemology and its attendant language of representation in favour of an approach that addresses itself more directly to the composition of the world . . . and in so doing stimulates an alertness towards forms of difference that cannot be reduced to a disparity of "worldviews."

My second point, therefore, is the further theoretical implication of the ontological turn's attempt to surpass perspectivism. This implies that we need to break with the assumption of a "singular, ordered world" for the sake of a "multinaturalism" (Woolgar and Lezaun 2013, 323). Such a shift forces us to think of multiple ontologies, produced out of various practices.

Practically, this approach can, for example, be seen in Law and Lien's concept of "empirical ontology." Based on their fieldwork on fish-farming practices in an anonymized firm in Norway, the authors argue that different sets of practices *actually* produce different salmons (Law and Lien 2013, 4). To make this point, the authors compare a publication about the Atlantic salmon with workers' day-to-day practices in the company. Both practices produce a different set of relations, and because these "(actor) network[s]" are creating different taxonomies, they argue, different salmons are produced (Law and Lien 2013, 4). Law and Lien call this an "empirical ontology," a model which suggests that alternate practices produce alternate realities.

Some of these objectives can now be put into the perspective of my case study. Taking the aforementioned concepts of practices seriously emphasizes the performative aspect of truth-claims and their ability to produce the things they describe. It takes informant's claims to truth seriously and reveals how

they produce the devotees' worlds. The ontological turn, thus, shows how a variety of practices produce the shrine and its tradition instead of merely providing us with different opinions on an object "out there." Instead of only one Hinglaj that is discovered by the anthropologist through assembling and evaluating various truth-claims, we now need to speak of many Hinglajs and many ritual journeys produced out of a multitude of truth-claims. Law and Lien would argue that "different and multiple [Hinglajs] subsist in different and multiple worlds" (Law and Lien 2013, 4).

The assumption of multiple ontologies, however, also presents us with serious theoretical inconsistencies. While the turn's radical performative approach and its rejection of one ontology are crucial, the discipline does not explain how such multiple ontologies relate *to each other*. One of its shortcomings for the study of truth-claims, therefore, lies in its disregarding of the further theoretical implications of ontology in plural. If there are ontologies in plural, are we not creating an ontology of plural ontologies—a meta-ontology? Furthermore, how can these ontologies be differentiated if there is no meta-ontology providing their differentiating principle? In other words, why are ontologies multiple yet not arbitrary?

Some scholars of the ontological turn address this by denying the key axiom of a dualist ontology all together and instead foreground a non-dualist multiplicity (Henare, Holbraad, and Wastell 2007, 16). Inspired by the work of Deleuze and Guattari and their rhizomatic thinking (Deleuze and Guattari 2005), the proponents of the turn often deny this idea of a binary ontology as yet another part of the "universality of nature versus relativity of culture" paradigm, which is rejected as a "[model] of investigation" (Descola 2010, 339). Instead, many ontological anthropologists celebrate a multiplicity that is not caught within dichotomies or binary structures.

This acknowledgment, however, does not keep the ontological turn from being just another meta-narrative despised by certain anthropologists. While I admire and support Descola's project of "plain anthropology" (Kelly 2014, 261) and its depth, the discipline fails to further engage with the notion of multiple ontologies, a step that, even though it aims to break with foundational claims, produces yet another one—this time the claim that ontologies, in fact, are multiple. Without abandoning the ontological turn's propositions altogether, I need to draw from another theory to explain how these "multiple Hinglajs" are supposed to relate *to each other*. For that I am suggesting the field of post-foundationalism, which precisely engages with further implications of multiple ontologies. In short, post-foundationalism suggests shifting the discussion about singular or multiple ontologies toward its foundation: the *struggle for ontology*. The following will, therefore, elaborate on this

move, which turns away from this dualism toward an ontological dynamic of exclusion and contingency.

1.3 Post-Foundationalism—From Identity to Identification

As we have seen, on the one hand, the theory of multiple ontologies put forward by anthropologists of the ontological does not offer a satisfying method to organize the plurality of truth-claims encountered during my research. Post-foundationalism, which developed out of theories of post-Marxism, on the other hand, puts forward a theory of hegemony and political struggle explaining the production and interaction of multiple truth-claims by rendering them as "nodal points." The discipline also avoids the highly charged term "ontology" and its recent inflationary use for the sake of the concept "foundational." This shifts ontology's metaphysical and cosmological language in the background and renders other possible structures—such as economy, nationalism, and biology—into possible foundations of society. The following can only be an introduction to post-foundationalism, mainly with the intention of reworking its theoretical premise into a methodology that will help me to engage with the chapter's underlying question: How to organize a multiplicity of truth-claims encountered in the field.

Post-foundationalism, like the ontological turn, rejects an undisputed and singular foundation of society. At the same time, however, it does not simply suggest its opposite—the free proliferation of multiple foundations (or ontologies). Rather, it emphasizes that the absence of an uncontested foundation makes repeated attempts to establish such a singular and unified foundation *necessary*. This does not completely abolish foundations but will foreground how such truth-claims necessarily need a constitutive outside. Judith Butler has best described this when she writes:

> [T]he point is not to do away with foundations . . . [but] the task is to interrogate what the theoretical move that establishes foundations *authorizes*, and what precisely it excludes or forecloses. (Butler 1994, 158)

Let us now start with the first part of the post-foundationalist paradox: the absence of an uncontested (and universal) foundation of society. The classical version of this argument probably goes back to Friedrich Nietzsche, who rendered his anti-foundationalist stance through his well-known metaphor "God is dead" (Nietzsche 2006, 141). Nietzsche, one of the main thinkers of what

would later become famous under the term "postmodernity," made an attack on philosophy and metaphysics that became one of the starting points of anti-foundationalism (Caputo 2013, 141).

Jacques Derrida, too, rejects such a notion of a "transcendental signified" as a possible structuring entity of discourse (Derrida 1978, 354). He also puts forth two arguments that thwart having such an Archimedean (universal or central) point within any given field. Derrida's first argument relates to the impossibility of any subject position to master a field's empirical richness. Applied to this case, no research, no institution, and no individual would ever be able to overlook the totality of information that has ever been produced on the Goddess Hinglaj and her tradition. Derrida's second argument aims to show that no discourse can conclusively and objectively establish a center from which the shifting of meaning can be stopped (Derrida 1978, 365). Again, with regard to my case study, this means that even if we were able to cover the totality of voices engaged with the shrine at Hinglaj and its practices, no situation would be imaginable in which they all would agree on one central element as its undisputable *axis mundi*.

This rejection of *one* ultimate foundation, however, cannot simply suggest its opposite, that is, the absence of *all* founding grounds. As we have seen, a celebration of plurality leads to a theoretical conundrum and prompts the question of how an unstructured field of equally valid foundations—as this is what the absence of any hegemonic meta-narrative implies—can be imagined. This shift from *one* to *no* foundation is the main impediment with theories of the ontological turn, as the lack of any hegemonic ontology leaves the field of ontologies unstructured and flat. According to Marchart, therefore, post-foundationalism

> must not be confused with *anti*-foundationalism or a vulgar and today somewhat out-dated "anything goes" postmodernism, since a post-foundational approach does not attempt to erase completely such figures of the ground, but to weaken their ontological status. (Marchart 2007, 2)

Foundationalism's inversion to a brute anti-foundationalism, where different practices produce different realities is, therefore, not an effective subsequent step. Such an approach offers nothing more than listing a cacophony of performative truth-claims producing a variety of different Hinglajs. Anti-foundationalism also cannot explain the aforementioned statements in which actors repeatedly deprecate each other's claims.

The rejection of both—foundationalism and anti-foundationalism—now opens the need for a framework that oscillates between these two.

To elaborate on this approach, I need to come back to the initial post-foundationalist paradox, that is, the absence of an ultimate foundation leads to its *necessary* production (Marchart 2010, 63–64). I start with its first part, the impossibility of an undisputed foundation that grounds society. If this statement holds true, we encounter a contradiction—namely, the claim that there can be no single foundation becomes itself a foundational claim. In other words, the absence of any last foundation needs to pertain to *all* foundations, which produces a double bind. If we are to accept the plurality of foundations (or ontologies), then this plurality is valid for all and, hence, a foundational principle. If we do not accept the plurality of foundations, however, then some universal grounding fact needs to be accepted (Marchart 2010, 66). In other words, the moment we aim to criticize foundationalism, we are already in the process of creating another foundation. This reveals how the assumption of an absence of any last foundation *necessarily* leads to the creation of another foundation.[3]

The paradox shows that it is not that simple to do away with foundational thinking. In fact, there are foundations all around us that structure the world and make it intelligible. Neoliberalism as a founding force of a new "governmental precarization" (Lorey 2015), religious doctrines structuring societies (Juergensmeyer 2008), or theories that ground a globalized world on the foundation of multiple ontologies (above) show that postmodernity has not exhausted narratives of the meta-narrative. Foundations are found everywhere around us and need to be taken seriously in our attempt to understand identities, group formations, and societies.

This has implications for the approach of this study and the question of how to meet a variety of truth-claims in the field. Because the impossibility of finding out the "real," the "proper," or the "actual" story behind Hinglaj does not lead to the assumption that all of these stories are equally "true"—and no interviewee in the field would agree with this assumption—any claim about truth (even the one that truth is plural), therefore, can only be understood as a struggle to make this truth be heard. With post-foundationalism, we not only maintain that truth-claims are performative but also show how their production is necessary for organizing a field of multiple voices. As I have shown, this field cannot be unstructured, and therefore, some of them will dominate and, thus, be more audible than others.

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3. This paradox has been expressed in various ways. The basic version of this thought that influenced many French philosophers of the twentieth century stems from Heidegger's ontic-ontological difference. See here Marchart 2010 and 2013a.

Translating this into a methodology for this work shifts my attention to the history of truth-claims and their contingent foundations. Because the establishment of undisputed foundations is impossible, however, dynamics at the shrine can only be identified as processes of solidifying such foundations. Due to the relatively recent dislocation of the tradition, the contingency within many of these truth-claims is conspicuous and so is the attempt to objectivize or solidify them. I do not claim, therefore, the absence of a homogeneous Hindu tradition at the shrine but rather show how the production of precisely such a unified identity has repeatedly been attempted by many actors. This work, thus, does not stop at showing that there are, in fact, multiple practices that produce multiple Hinglajs but instead emphasizes the dynamics with which actors themselves aim to establish *one true* Hinglaj practice. As we will see, this methodology is particularly useful in cases where traditions have recently undergone significant changes and are now in the process of re-evaluating their central concepts.

While a variety of scholars have dealt with the further implications of such post-foundational thought (Lefort 1988; Ranciere 1999; Žižek 2008), in what follows, I will particularly take up the early writings of Laclau and Mouffe (2001) to strengthen my methodological premises. Their concept of the "nodal point" will be a useful tool to engage with actors at Hinglaj and their practice of eliminating contradictory narratives. A critical engagement with Laclau and Mouffe's version of post-foundationalism shows confluence and dissonance between their work and my case study, and will later assist me in defining my own way of approaching identity formations at Hinglaj through the concept of solidification.

1.3.1 Laclau and Mouffe's Nodal Point

Discursive formations and their implication for the generation of collective identities are key for Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe in studying social movements. In their early work, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (Laclau and Mouffe 2001),[4] the authors modify and apply, among others, the works of Saussure, Foucault, and Derrida to the study of political communities. Since their project initially started as an answer to the crisis of communism in the 1980s, it is sometimes also associated with a broader post-Marxist

4. Even though there are many later writings by Laclau (1996, 2006, 2007a, 2007b) and Mouffe (2000, 2013), I have chosen *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* as the main text to be introduced here. I consider this work to be the most concise engagement with the fundamental questions of post-foundationalism.

movement. Their non-essentialist approach to group formation through the production of "nodal points" is an apt basis for identity-dynamics at Hinglaj after 1986.

In general, Laclau and Mouffe argue against any kind of foundationalism (be it economic or otherwise) and instead introduce the concept of articulation as a starting point to approach the formation of boundaries and the establishment of social movements. In this way, Laclau and Mouffe also deny groups any natural core per se, instead focusing on the dynamic aspect of group formation. This rejection of any given foundation within a society can also be applied to supposedly "fixed" identities such as castes or religious communities. To explain such developments, they write:

> [W]e will call *articulation* any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, we will call *discourse*. The differential positions, insofar as they appear articulated within a discourse we will call *moments*. By contrast, we will call *element* any difference that is not discursively articulated. (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 105)

This quote illuminates the vocabulary necessary for understanding key components of this approach. To explain the production of nodal points, the difference between elements and moments is crucial. While elements are free-floating (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 113), proto-ideological (Stavrakakis 1997) signifiers, they turn into moments only after they are "captured" by a given discourse. Of course, the taxonomy of elements and moments depends on the discursive lens through which these signs are perceived. Thus, for example, the sign of the World Trade Center's Twin Towers in New York City changed abruptly on the morning of September 11, 2001, from an element into a moment of the "war on terror" discourse. However, the Twin Towers could long have been (and probably were) a moment within a discourse on architecture in Manhattan. In other words, elements are in a stage of not (yet) being associated with a particular ensemble of meanings. Of course, the assumption of an element is purely theoretical and thus has a mere heuristic value since any articulatory practice will immediately draw an element into a syntagmatic relationship with the corresponding discourse. Moments, on the other hand, occupy a particular position as links within a semiotic chain and help to transport meaning. Nevertheless, even if an element becomes a moment, no discourse can define the moment's meaning once and for all. However, a temporary fixation of its meaning is possible.

This relation between a moment's meaning and the limits of the discursive formation where it is articulated is crucial, and its post-foundationalist move deserves some more attention. According to Saussure, whose semiology has had an important influence on Laclau and Mouffe, signs within a language are relational and can only be defined through their differences from other signs within that system. Thus, any sign attains its identity only by virtue of the contrast with another sign (Saussure 2001). To be able to understand the word "chair," for example, one must differentiate it from other items of furniture, such as "table," "closet," or "bed." The signifier "chair" occupies a precise position that is defined through its relation to other elements and only reveals its meaning through its difference from any of them. But "chair" not only requires this internal differential logic to be understood; it must also have some relationship to the whole system of signs of which it is a part—in this example to the category of "furniture." Laclau writes in a later publication:

> [I]f we have a purely differential ensemble, its totality has to be present in each individual act of signification. Conceptually grasping that totality is the condition of signification as such . . . however, to grasp that totality conceptually, we have to grasp its limits—that is to say, we have to differentiate it from something *other* than itself. (Laclau 2007b, 69)

Thus, to describe any symbolic system, knowledge of its borders becomes necessary. But for the establishment of borders, other symbolic systems must be present to facilitate the production of meaning through difference. Here, Laclau and Mouffe criticize Saussure for describing signification as a closed system (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 112–113). Because if we assumed such a closed totality containing a limited number of available signs, it would be possible to rigidly fix the signifier's identity through its relation to others.

As has already been provided with the work of Derrida above, no discourse of signification can ever be closed but must always leave room for supplemented meaning. This "iterability" makes a full closing of the play of signification impossible (Derrida 1977). The result is an overdetermination of every sign, lacking any means of complete ascertainment. Since there is always another possible interpretation of the signifier (the "chair" can be used in myriad contexts), the signification of signs can never be closed. At a conference, the question "Who takes the chair?" would probably be answered in a different way than at a furniture store. Therefore, while one signifier has to be differentiated from all others within a discourse, this differentiation alone does not guarantee a final definition of its content.

In a post-foundationalist move, however, Laclau and Mouffe need to do both. They need to assert the existence of a flow of meaning but at the same time assume a temporary closure of discourse. This is necessary, as we have seen, because it is only through the knowledge of its borders (the momentary closure of the discourse) that a sign can attain its relational place within a symbolic order and meaning can be produced (Howarth 2000, 118).[5] Any kind of discourse, therefore, is an attempt to stop the polysemy of the signifiers and to remove their ambiguities. Laclau and Mouffe call signifiers that temporarily stop the sliding of meaning and change elements into moments of a discourse "nodal points." Such nodal points might best be understood as similar or even equivalent to French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist Jacques Lacan's "*point de capiton*" (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, xi). Often translated as a "quilting point," the *point de capiton* literally describes the fixation button in upholstery, which shapes and grips the fabric underneath. In the same way as the quilting point fixates and simultaneously forms the soft padding, so the nodal point, too, fixes and shapes discourse.[6] This is where the concept of the nodal point becomes important and can, furthermore, be related to what has been said above about truth-claims. Similar to how nodal points structure their discursive environment, truth-claims, too, aim to organize the field of possibilities around them by excluding ambivalence and polysemy.

The last important conceptual tool to explain the working of nodal points is the tension between the "logic of difference" and the "logic of equivalence" (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 127–134). Again, a practical example can make this clear. The representation of any group (and groups are also a particular organization of symbols and representations) requires the establishment of at least one "anti-group" or "enemy" so that its key concepts may be organized. Here the logic of equivalence consists in the corruption of all particular identities vis-á-vis the "anti-group." In this way, the identity of the chain of equivalence

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5. Laclau associates this temporary closure of the discourse with Derrida's "ethico-theoretical decision" (Laclau 2007a, 89).

6. In his later work, Laclau will rename such nodal points "empty signifiers" without neatly distinguishing between the two (Laclau 2007b). For the sake of consistency, however, I will continue to use Laclau and Mouffe's terminology of the nodal point in this work. Laclau himself writes that they both point to the same "referent" but that the concept of the nodal point "makes allusion to the articulating function, while its empty character points in the direction of its universal signification" (in Glynos and Stavrakakis 2006, 322). For this work, I accept that there is no significant difference between the two and that they represent the same concept expressed in different terms. For a further discussion on this topic, see Howarth 2000; Norval 2000; Glynos and Stavrakakis 2006. For another taxonomy of these *termini technici*, see Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 50.

is not provided by some common denominator that is found in its equivalent elements but rather through its border, that is, through a common negation of some excluded other. In contrast, the "logic of difference" attempts to disperse such opposing groups and highlights the particular identities of the ensemble (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 45). For Laclau and Mouffe, the creation of political movements—and identities in general—follows an interplay between chains of equivalence and difference. Chains of equivalence are structured through their opposition to certain nodal points that organize the community and delineate its borders.

These different parts of Laclau and Mouffe's theory have, however, not explained what ultimately substitutes the absent foundation of society. Their answer is the concept of "hegemony." Mainly associated with the work of Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), this theoretical model was initially applied to tackle the host of ideological inconsistencies in Marxist thought in the first half of the twentieth century. Gramsci advanced the concept of hegemony to indicate power over "subordinate classes" through combining coercion and persuasion (Simon 1991, 24). Laclau and Mouffe basically adopt this notion, but they free it from, as they say, the last two remaining essentialisms: class consciousness and the singularity of hegemonic centers (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 137f.). In their work, hegemony is more general and abstract, which implies in its very basic form a way to understand "unity existing in a concrete social formation" (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 7). As it is the nodal point (or in fact many of them) that temporarily arrests the flow of meaning, hegemony produces and is produced out of repeated acts of exclusion. Within Laclau and Mouffe's post-foundationalist approach, hegemony, therefore, takes on the position of the absent foundation of society. Following the aforesaid, precisely because there is no last ground of society, hegemony needs to take its place as a de facto objectivity. As we will see later, hegemony plays a crucial part in the solidification of tradition at the shrine of Hinglaj, where the struggle of opposing truth-claims is sedated through the institutionalization of one community and their particular practices and narratives.

To encounter a possible point of criticism, it is important to note one more thing. All of the aforesaid pertains not merely to textual elements and linguistic signs but also to systems of signification in general. This material aspect is crucial as it thwarts allegation against discourse theory as merely dealing with speech or writings. Building on Wittgenstein's "language games," Laclau and Mouffe insist upon the materiality of their theory and write:

> The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has *nothing to do* with whether there is a world external to thought, or with

> the realism/idealism opposition. An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of "natural phenomena" or "expressions of the wrath of God," depends upon the structuring of a discursive field. What is denied is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive condition of emergence. (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 108)

This distinct material aspect of Laclau and Mouffe's approach makes a connection to theories of the ontological turn possible. The materiality of discourse will become particularly important in Chapter 5 where I will deal with the *spatialization* of the Hinglaj tradition. While their early work does not offer a conceptual tool for the materialization of discourse, Laclau, as we will see below, briefly tackles this problem in one of his later publications.

1.4 From Theory Back into Practice

Now with this theoretical framework, it is time to turn back to the initial methodological problem. On the one hand, the plurality of truth-claims at the shrine shows that the anthropologist's search for an undisputed foundation of the tradition is, at least theoretically, futile. On the other hand, however, most of the opinions collected about the Goddess and the practices associated with her precisely claim such a definite core of the tradition. Such dynamics have become particularly conspicuous after the construction of a road connecting the ancient place to urban Pakistan, leading to a dislocation of the former traditions. This event has opened the site to a broader public and, therefore, has caused a variety of truth-claims to collide. Building on the aforesaid, this book does not merely aim at describing the wide range of voices engaging with Hinglaj and her Balochistan temple but rather looks at the struggles over the "true" narratives about the Goddess and her ritual practices. That is to say, the events at the shrine are not only a proof for the absence of a homogeneous (Pakistani-) Hindu identity but also show the various ways in which the creation of precisely such a unity is attempted by ways of exclusion. In the following, I will look at how the introduced dynamics of repeated exclusions combine into tangible social practices and whole groups.

1.4.1 From Sedimentation . . .

How does the aforementioned theory of discourse explain the production of social practices, and how do they eventually turn into cultural space? As has already been shown, in Laclau and Mouffe's work, discourse not only pertains to text but also produces materiality. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, however, does not offer any extensive theoretical tool to understand how articulations accumulate into tangible social structures.[7] Only in a more recent publication does Laclau (briefly) pick up on the institutionalization of discourse with the help of Edmund Husserl's (1859–1938) concept of sedimentation. It is here that he aims to set out a theory on how social structures are produced (Laclau 1990).

In *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, Laclau revisits his and Chantal Mouffe's work to summarize parts of their jointly produced approach. Due to the prominent position of exclusion and antagonism within their work, Laclau, at one point, needs to answer the following question: How does this theory explain nonantagonistic day-to-day practices such as having one's mail delivered, or sitting down to lunch with an acquaintance (Laclau 1990, 33)? In other words, how can a post-foundationalist ontology, which builds significantly upon the notion of a constitutive exclusion, explain quotidian interactions and group formations, where no such kinds of antagonisms are visible? Laclau aims to answer this with Husserl's concept of sedimentation, which, according to him,

> entails a routinization in which the results of previous scientific investigation tend to be taken for granted and reduced to a simple manipulation, with the result that the original intuition which gave rise to them is completely forgotten. (Laclau 1990, 34)

Laclau now reshapes Husserl's argument to explain the production of day-to-day interactions and practices. The above-mentioned "routinization" produces "the social"—the everyday world—as a widely uncontested field out of "the political," that is, the dynamics of exclusionary decisions (Laclau 1990, 35). In the spirit of the aforesaid post-foundational paradox, this means that on the one hand, no social formation is imaginable which has not built its unity on exclusionary decisions, and on the other hand, no exclusionary decision is conceivable without first building on already-present social acts.

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7. Only in the later preface to the second edition of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* do the authors introduce the concept of sedimentation (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, viii).

Through this looping motion of repetition and exclusion, stable social practices emerge as uncontested.

What does this mean for the study of truth-claims? This theory means that in the moment of their articulation, truth-claims build on the obvious exclusion of others to produce meaning. Through the repetition of this exclusion, truth-claims (and their equivalential chain, in the sense of Laclau and Mouffe above) become historic facts, and their original contingent foundation is covered up (Bergunder 2014, 266–269). Returning to Laclau's example above, the act of getting mail needs to follow a certain sequence, even though variations are possible. This also implies that sedimented structures limit the range of possible and meaningful decisions within a defined field, which results in the ossification of social practices. Everyday social reality characterizes itself through a certain degree of predictability, that is, a practice needs to be repeatable and predictable for a certain objectivity to emerge (Marchart 2013b, 190). Importantly, however, this field tends to forget its origins and, therefore, conceals its contingent foundations. In this way, the primary exclusions are covered up, and nonantagonistic social practices are produced through the institutionalization of discourse. In other words, the sedimentation of power relations leads to the construction of objectivity (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 38). It is important, however, to recall the previously mentioned post-foundationalist ground in this context. Even though sedimentation leads to the construction of objectivity, no structure can establish itself as a complete totality. Rather, naturalized forms of objectivity are also not completely undisputed.

Laclau has also been criticized for not giving any thorough explanation about the operational means of such sedimentation (Marchart 2013b, 195; Howarth 2006). In Laclau's reception of Husserl, sedimentation is described as the "forgetting of origins," and he further merely explains that such a forgetting "*tends* to occur" (Laclau 1990, 34; italics added). He further writes that sedimentation appears the moment "the instituted *tends* to assume the form of a mere objective presence" (Laclau 1990, 23; italics added). In both descriptions, Laclau fails to clarify what he means by a *tendency* to objectivize, and at no point is a detailed description of the dimensions and texture of sedimentation given.

This lack of supplying a theory that is connecting the everyday with the system of exclusion in Laclau's work has been taken up by a few of his students who aim to clarify the connection between (post-foundational) discourse theory and empirical case studies. Oliver Marchart, for example, offers an approach to the production of (sedimented) social structures in his book *Die Prekarisierunggesellschaft* and suggests looking at "Hegemoniemaschinen," material instruments that produce hegemonic formations (2013b). Glynos

and Howarth, on their part, produce a matrix of three logics (political, social, and fantasmatic) which seek to provide such a post-foundational methodology (Glynos and Howarth 2007). All of these attempts show that the Laclauian theory of sedimentation lacks in explanatory force and, hence, needs to be adapted to each individual case study.

A theory of sedimentation, among others, has most famously been used by Judith Butler, who critically questioned the link between materiality and naturalized gender norms (Butler 1999). For Butler, it is the effect of sedimentation that helps sex to acquire its naturalized and, hence, powerful position within the discourse on gender (Butler 2011, xix). A remark capturing Butler's understanding of sedimentation is found in *Bodies That Matter* (Butler 2011). There, she briefly comments on Freud's note on the relation between biological sex and psychoanalysis:

> [The idea that] in the psychical field the biological factor is really rock bottom . . . is, interestingly, a figure of a ground that is nevertheless sedimented through time, and so not a ground, but an effect of a prior process covered over by this ground. (Butler 2011, 150)

Sedimentation, in this reading, describes the production of foundations, which themselves are the outcome of prior sedimentations. By this, Butler aims to emphasize the absence of a primary sedimentation that might at one point be discovered. Every sedimentation is, therefore, always already a second sedimentation (Marchart 2013b, 192)—which makes its origin a moot point. Notwithstanding the fact that sedimentation features prominently in Butler's project through the radical historization of "a set of corporeal styles" (Butler 1999, 178), nowhere does she critically engage with the concept. Similar to Laclau, Butler, too, omits the question of when exactly we are able to speak of sedimented structures (cf. Butler 1994, 1997, 1999, 2011).

To sum up, at no point in Laclau's or Butler's work does sedimentation emerge as a thoroughly explained concept. Instead, sedimentation stands in for a social objectivity, which discloses its structure only in moments of dislocation and rupture. A way to measure the concatenation of repeated articulations, necessary to speak of sedimented structures, is not supplied. In other words, both authors avoid introducing the operational means of sedimentation. Both, however, utilize sedimentation as a metaphor to describe highly ossified social practices. Laclau mentions a process in which the "forgetting of the origins' tends to occur" (Laclau 1990, 34), while Butler utilizes sedimentation for criticizing the naturalization of power relations through sex. Jacob

Torfing, a political scientist, provides a similar yet more thorough definition of sedimented social relations in his work on post-foundational discourse theory (Torfing 2003). For Torfing they constitute

> an institutional ensemble of rules, norms, values and regularities, which we take for granted in our everyday life. [Sedimented structures are] not subjected to the ongoing practices of constitution and subversion. (Torfing 2003, 70)

In other words, sedimented social structures, in this reading, stand for an objectivity, which generally is not contested. This understanding is congruent with Butler's and Laclau's utilization of the term.

1.4.2 . . . to Solidification

None of these metaphors, however, is well suited to help describe the events documented at Hinglaj. The already briefly introduced institutional and infrastructural changes around the shrine rather caused a variety of sedimented objectivities from different traditions to collide. Due to this recent dislocation, numerous events at Hinglaj can precisely be termed as acts of ongoing "constitution and subversion" (Torfing 2003, 70). The Hindu community's upheaval makes the coining of predictable practices difficult, and even though many practices have been successfully repeated, others simply ceased over time. Let me explain this situation with a couple of examples from the field.

In 2009, Gopal Maharaj, the only permanent priest (Hin. *pujārī*) at the Hinglaj temple, explained that the puzzling second face found in the Goddess's effigy represents the demon Hingol, a local tyrant killed by the Devi in mythological times. Later, in 2012, the priest changed his explanation, insisting instead that the second face is that of a *vīr* (Hin. hero/army commander) of the Goddess Durga, who killed the demon Mahishasura. Maharaj, who gained his position as a *pujārī* through appointment by the local temple committee (the HSM) in 2008, revises the story and connects the shrine to a broader Hindu discourse. In it, he sets aside the tyrant Hingol, who is a part of the local tradition, and changes him into the demon Mahishasura, a figure of the famous *Devī Māhātmaya*.[8] Since Maharaj is the only permanent *pujārī* at the shrine

8. Such associations are frequent in South Asia's religious landscapes. Eck calls these "duplication" or "multiplication" processes the "geographical Sanskritisation" (Eck 1998, 166–167).

and thus an authority for many visitors, his words and his interpretation of the shrine's mythology have a strong impact on views held by the pilgrims. His quick change of opinion shows how, in 2009, no prevailing explanation had emerged that was "not subjected to the ongoing practices of constitution and subversion" (Torfing 2003, 70).

Another example, which will be dealt with in detail in Chapter 6, is the ban on animal sacrifice inside the valley (see also Schaflechner 2015b). Even though, during my time at the shrine, this prohibition was often portrayed as a natural part of the Hinglaj tradition, the history of the ban shows how organizational difficulties caused the ritual practice inside the valley to stop. This led to an official ban by the temple organization as recently as 2004. Only after the ban was put into effect was the prohibition increasingly reinterpreted as a religions decision and became an important part of the tradition.

These two examples show how a struggle for *one* history or, in other words, the struggle over "truth" at the Hinglaj shrine is fairly conspicuous today. It is this attempt by many actors to produce norms and a fairly uncontested history, which I suggest to call *a solidification of tradition*. A solidifying tradition, thus, has not (yet) convinced most of its critics, its contingent foundations are still very much visible, while a sedimented tradition has already succeeded in creating a reasonably undisputed terrain.[9] Due to the difficulties in measuring the concatenation of articulations that over time form an undisputed cultural topography and due to the inaccuracy within the literature when we speak of sedimentation, I suggest to separate these two along a temporal axis. Though I am not proposing to establish a hard and fast border, I suggest to understand solidification as acts that follow recent moments of dislocation, while sedimented social practices pertain to already fairly naturalized phenomena whose last dislocating moment has long since passed.

1.4.3 Reflexivity

At this point, it is important to note the agency of this present study without overestimating its possible impact. As the production of written or recorded material is often a step within the solidification of tradition, due to

9. While the verb "solidify" is defined as: "to make [something] solid, compact, or hard" or "to become solid, compact, or hard," "sedimentation" means: "the . . . process in which [already solidified] material (such as stones and sand) is carried to the bottom of a body of water and forms a solid layer." (Both entries are taken from Merriam-Webster http://www.merriam-webster.com.)

its production of central nodal points, naturally, the research for this work also left its traces on the object under investigation. As discursive structures are not merely "cognitive" but are also "*articulatory practices*" (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 96) that produce social relations, any kind of social study should not be blind toward its effect on the studied object. Any recorded articulation has to emphasize its role as "a practice [in this case the writing of a book] of linking together elements in a logic that modifies each particular element, and results in a synthesis" (Howarth 2010, 326). Thus, the eclecticism within the analysis of field research and the decision about "which particularity is to be privileged" (Malkki 1995, 56) is not only describing a certain narrative but also *producing* one. Bruno Latour, an influential figure in the aforementioned ontological turn, wrote at one point:

> [A]ny study of any group by any social scientist is part and parcel of what makes the group exist, last, decay, or disappear. In the developed world, there is no group that does not have at least some social science instrument attached to it. (Latour 2005, 33f.)

Again, let me exemplify this with an episode from the field. In 2010, I documented the Hinglaj pilgrimage by a group of devotees from Gujarat (Schaflechner 2011). The party was headed by Dayaram Kapri, who also served as the spiritual guide. In Pakistan, the tour had been organized by the HSM, and Virsimal Dewani, the main organizer in charge, accompanied the group. Local and national news picked up the story of the Indian pilgrims, and so two television teams came to the temple and interviewed Dayaram, Dewani, and Gopal Maharaj, the resident priest at the temple. When the men, one after the other, were asked during the interviews what the temple's main *sanctum sanctorum* shows, all three gave conflicting answers. One said that the image stands for the womb of the Goddess, while another claimed that the upper part of the Goddess's head has fallen there. The third described a story in which it became evident that, in fact, it is the face of the Goddess Durga together with her main army officer that is found at Hinglaj. During a subsequent meeting when I was sitting together with some of the pilgrims, I overheard the three men argue about the previous events. Dewani was not happy with the presentation on the television, as their interviews, he said, were edited in a way that made them appear ignorant and simply uninformed about the image of the Goddess. During the discussion, all three quoted their sources of information, but without finding an agreement, Dewani suddenly turned to me and said: "You come from a university, you will find out what the image really stands for!"

In this way, the present study plays its own role in the solidification of the Hinglaj tradition and thus also produces—intentionally and unintentionally—another truth-claim. This time, through the foundational acknowledgment, that *actual* objectivity can *only* be understood as totalizing attempts to establish precisely such an objective truth.

1.5 Conclusion

Let us return to the initial methodological question: What could be a proper way to represent the plurality of truth-claims encountered when dealing with the Balochistan shrine and its many practices? For a theoretical grounding of this methodological predicament, I first looked at anthropological writings following the so-called ontological turn. While the turn's emphasis on practice and performativity is helpful for engaging with such truth-claims at eye-level (with anthropological theory), it does not explain how they engage with each other. I further suggested remedying this by looking at post-foundationalism and its central paradox—namely, that the absence of any last foundation is *necessary*. This rejection of society's last ground does not merely claim that there are no foundations at all, but rather assumes that last foundations are constantly attempted but never completely attained. The events at Hinglaj constantly display normative categories, for example, adjectives like the "actual," the "real," and the "proper," which already pose a political decision. The repeated exclusion happening through such truth-claims, ultimately, sediments social practices into naturalized objectivities. Unfortunately, sedimentation as a theoretical concept is rather vaguely defined. All authors under scrutiny—Butler, Laclau, and Torfing—however, use the metaphor to describe highly ossified social practices. That is, while sedimentation describes fairly stable objective realities, solidification tries to capture the fact that during the fieldwork for this book (2009–2015), many claims about the Goddess were still contested and not "naturalized" in a public sphere. With its recent dislocatory events—for example, the construction of a road—many powerful actors are currently in the process of producing an objective tradition at the site. An increasing institutionalization was conspicuously *taking place*.

The operational means of this process of solidification are, of course, not generalizable and reveal themselves only within a particular empirical case study. The following, for example, will reveal how the processes of solidification around the shrine of Hinglaj are characterized through the institutionalization of the pilgrimage and the site's rituals, the rationalization

(and de-rationalization) of certain practices and mytho-historic narratives, and, finally, the impact of spatial conceptions through the construction of temples and shelters at Hinglaj. Acknowledging the tension between fluidity and solidification promises to be particularly helpful for the analysis of traditions in upheaval—such as the events at and involving the shrine of Hinglaj in Balochistan.

2

Hinglaj in Perspective

2.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the histories and the common perceptions of Hinglaj in Pakistan and abroad. I will break down the broader discourse on the Goddess and her site in Balochistan into three, at times, overlapping and interdependent parts. These will be analyzed under the notion of mytho-history, a concept which emphasizes how memories of a mythological past become significant moments of present day politics. What makes a narrative mythical is "not its truth or falsity, but the fact that it [is] concerned with *order* in a fundamental, cosmological sense" (Malkki 1995, 55). This attempt to produce order (through inclusion and exclusion) in the present with the help of a recourse on past events is typical of truth-claims at Hinglaj. The term *mytho-historic* is inspired by the work of Lawrence Babb ("mythohistorical knowledge," Babb 2004, 24) and Liisa Malkki ("mythico-history," Malkki 1995), who both use mythological traditions to gain insight into the past and present situations of certain communities. Mytho-historic narratives, in short, discuss a claimed past and its impact on the present. Taking this into account, this chapter will look first at a variety of Sanskrit sources to show where the name of the Goddess Hinglaj appeared. In the course of doing this, I will also problematize the attempt to accurately date the tradition with the help of such texts. Second, I will illustrate the link between Hinglaj and different castes and communities on the western part of the subcontinent to show which kind of mytho-historical accounts are told about the Goddess today. Last, I will analyze Hinglaj's importance for modern-day Sindhi nationalism, and I will show how the shrine has turned into a hallmark of Sindh's "golden past."

2.2 Sanskrit Representations of the Goddess Hinglaj

In the eyes of many Pakistani (and Indian) Hindus, Hinglaj is the oldest and thus the greatest of all *śākta pīṭhas* (Skt. seats of power) in the world. The term *pīṭha* (Skt. seat, altar) specifically describes holy sites relating to Goddess worship all over South Asia (see below). Pakistani devotees today claim that this primary position is because Hinglaj would be a "*xālis sthān*" (Hin.), a "real" pilgrimage place, linked, for example, to its characteristic of being *svayaṃbhū* (Hin.; Skt. *svayambhū*), self-generated (this will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5). Others legitimize this claim by noting that Hinglaj (as Hiṅgulā, Hiṅgulāja, Hiṅgulāṭa) has been mentioned in various Sanskrit sources and thereby, is part of the real deal.[1] In many such sources, the site in Balochistan appears as one of the *śākta pīṭhas*, also associated with the famous legend of the Goddess Sati found in the *Mahābhārata*. This mentioning in the Sanskrit corpus serves as "symbolic capital" for the temple in Balochistan, frequently wielded by devotees in conversations about the shrine's legitimacy.

Authors writing about Hinglaj also attempt to prove that the shrine possesses ancient origins by pointing to its mention in the various *Tantras* or *Purāṇas*. Sanskrit sources, however, are of limited use in dating Hinglaj to a particular era. The *Tantras* and *Purāṇas* are notoriously difficult to date; there is no universally accepted canon, and many important texts have been lost. As Sanskrit scholar Ludo Rocher writes: "On numerous occasions scholars have taken notice of the existence of manuscripts the contents of which did not correspond to those of any of the published versions" (Rocher 1986, 61). A direct link between the mentioning of the name in Sanskrit sources and the site in Balochistan today is difficult to prove. The following can only be a rough outline of a few text passages where the name "Hinglaj," or its variations, appear within a greater Sanskrit corpus.

Sanskrit Tantric sources from different time periods, possibly dating to as early as the eighth century CE (Sircar 1973, 12), refer to different numbers of *śākta pīṭhas*. Datta writes that the oldest known Tantric texts name four such *pīṭhas*, a number that grows in texts from late medieval times (Datta 2009, 156f.). Following Sircar, Urban asserts that the oldest of these "seats of power" were located in two regions of the northern Himalayas—in the northeast,

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1. Ibrahim Shah mentions three *śākta pīṭha* in Pakistan, yet he does not present or evaluate the sources upon which he bases this assertion. However, I agree with him that Hinglaj is the most frequented of these three (Shah 2008, 26). Singh and Singh (2010) name two other places of Goddess worship in Pakistan mentioned in the *Matsya Purāṇa*.

around Kamakhya, and in the northwest, around the Swat valley (Urban 2011, 36). The oldest known texts dealing with these *pīṭhas*, namely the *Hevajra Tantra, Sādhanamāla*, and the *Kālikā Purāṇa*, however, do not include Hinglaj in their respective lists of four (Datta 2009, 157).

Sircar mentions that the name "Hiṅgulā" is found in the *Kulārṇava Tantra* and that—when allegedly quoting the *Rudrayāmala*—names eighteen *pīṭhas*, with "Hiṅgulā" being third on the list (Sircar 1973, 18). Scholars, however, have different opinions about the dating of this text. P. V. Kane, for example, estimates the *Kulārṇava Tantra* to be earlier than 1000 CE (Banerji 2007, 149), while Brooks believes the text was written later, between the eleventh and the fifteenth centuries (Brooks 2002, 347). White estimates the *Kulārṇava* to have been produced between the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries (White 2003, 23). The dating of this text, therefore, is of limited use in the attempt to locate the name "Hiṅgulā" within a more concise time frame. The *Rudrayāmala*, out of which the quote has allegedly been taken, also cannot help much in this regard. Sircar assumes that the text was composed before 1052 CE (Sircar 1973, 17n4). But White dates it to an era not earlier than the thirteenth or fourteenth century, during what he calls the "Tantric revival" (White 2003, 23). So here, too, we encounter a fairly wide time span. Regardless of its age, the currently available text of the *Rudrayāmala Tantra* itself does, in fact, mention only ten such *pīṭhas* as the principal holy sites of the Goddess. The name "Hiṅgulā" is not one of them. In other words, even if we would follow Sircar in his fairly concise dating of the *Rudrayāmala*, the section that mentions Hiṅgulā is actually only quoted in the later *Kulārṇava Tantra*, dating to somewhere between the tenth and the fifteenth centuries.

The *Kubjikā Tantra*, another text that, according to Sircar, is "usually supposed to be a fairly early work," mentions Hinglaj (under the name "Hiṅgulā") as the fifth of *summa summarum* forty-two *pīṭhas* (Sircar 1973, 19). Bharati, however, describes the *Kubjikā Tantra* as "a late work," meaning a time between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries (Bharati 1965, 66n25). Banerji does not attempt to estimate a date for this text (Banerji 2007, 146).[2] The mentioning of Hinglaj in the *Kubjikā Tantra* can also not be associated with a clear chronology; tantric texts, therefore, prove fairly inaccurate for the attempt to date the occurrence of the name Hinglaj.

2. Abhinavagupta, a writer from the tenth to the eleventh century, mentions *Kubjikāmātā Tantra*. Banerji emphasizes, however, that the *Kubjikāmātā* and the *Kubjikā Tantra* are different texts (Banerji 2007, 146).

The analysis of the *Purāṇa* literature might be more helpful in this regard. First and foremost, Vasudeva Agrawala's work on the *Vāmana Purāṇa* (*VāmP*) deserves some attention as he suggests an early mentioning of the site there (Agrawala 1964, 136–140). In this part of the *VāmP*, the text describes Shiva's fights against the demon Andhaka, during which a girl named Carcikā is born out of Shiva's sweat (Agrawala 1964, 136–140). At *VāmP* chapter 44, verse 47, it reads that Carcikā later roamed the earth only to eventually settle at "the best of all places—the Hingulata mountain" (Gupta 1968, 393).[3] On the basis of this, Agrawala assumes (a) that this line is, in fact, a reference to the mountain range in Balochistan and (b) that Hiṅgulāja is the "Indianization" of a Nani cult at the same place (Agrawala 1964, 137). While the latter argument will be discussed in detail, at this point, I want to add that I cannot share Agrawala's conviction about the location of the shrine. Even though this is a striking reference, a conclusive link between the text and the site in Balochistan as the location of the Hingula mountain is not given because the *VāmP* does not elaborate on where the aforesaid mountain is to be found. Furthermore, Brighenti points out the fact that another text, the early Pali Buddhist *Kuṇālajātaka*, locates the Hingula mountain in the Himalaya instead of toward the western side of the subcontinent (Brighenti 2016, 44). Purāṇa literature is also difficult to date. Rocher quotes a few scholars whose opinions on the *VāmP* range from the ninth to the sixteenth centuries. He ends his digression, however, with the work of Hazara, who suggested that the origins of the text are "most probably" found in the ninth century (Rocher 1986, 240–241). G. P. Bhatt dates the text even earlier into the first half of the seventh century (Bhatt 2013, xiv)—connecting it to the empires of Harṣavardhana and Mahendravarma Pallava. Mylius on the other hand estimates the *VāmP* to be a "late" text (Mylius 1988, 143). Again, we are confronted with a wide range of possibilities. Although Bhatt's estimate seems a little too early, many scholars agree that the *VāmP* could indeed be of an early origin, thus making this possibly one of the first mentioning of the name Hiṅgulā.

The *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* (*BVP*) mentions Hinglaj (under the name Hiṅgulā), stating that a devotee reaches the end of the rebirth circle by seeing the idol of Durga at Hinglaj on the eighth day after the new moon

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3. *ityevamuktā varadena carcikā bhūtānujātā haricarmavāsinī/mahīṃ samantād vicacāra sundarī sthānaṃ gatā haiṅgulatādrimuttamam* (*Vāmana Purāṇa*, 44.47; taken from the Göttingen Register of Electronic Texts in Indian Languages, http://gretil.sub.uni-goettingen.de/gretil/1_sanskr/3_purana/vamp__u.htm).

in the month *āśvin* (Skt.).[4] The name of the *BVP* was known to Al Biruni (973–1048) and thus must be older than the eleventh century (Brown 1974, 23f.). However, the extent to which this name also refers to the canonical text of the *BVP* as we find it today is questionable (Brown 1974, 24). Mylius doubts that the *BVP* is one of the earlier *Purāṇas* and thus calls it a "fairly late" composition (Mylius 1988, 142). According to Farquhar, the part in which the pilgrimage to Hinglaj is mentioned, the *Kṛṣṇajanmakhaṇḍa* is an interpolation into the *BVP* and thus must have been produced after the core text. The general part about the *pīṭhas* must also be understood as a later interpolation, inserted not earlier than the fourteenth or fifteenth century (Sircar 1973, 6n3).

The *Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa's* (*DBh*) core elements are likely from the eleventh or twelfth century, and its final version must have taken four to five more centuries to emerge (Brown 1992, 3). Beane dates the text to sometime between the eighth and twelfth centuries but generally tends to date texts earlier than do other scholars (Beane 1977, 62). Hazara suggests that the *DBh* was completed no later than 1200 AD. The given list of 108 names and places of worship in section VII, chapter 30, pp. 53–102 does not include the name Hinglaj. Only a later list in section VII, chapter 38, pp. 5–30 identifies Hiṅgulā as one of the *śākta tīrthas*. Even this list, however, is said to be a medieval interpolation (Sircar 1973, 107).

In the *Pīṭhanirṇaya* (*PN*), the number of fifty-one *śākta pīṭhas* was first associated with the body parts of the Goddess Sati (Sircar 1973, 4). In this list, Hinglaj is mentioned first, and thus the text is most frequently quoted as proof of the primary position of Hinglaj among all the *śākta* seats. The description in the *PN* provides the name of the *pīṭha* (Hiṅgulā, Hiṅgulāṭa) as well as the names of the residing Goddess there (Koṭṭarī, Koṭṭavī, Koṭṭarīśā),[5] the associated form of Shiva (Bhīmalocana), and most significantly, the part of Satī's body—the *brahmarandhra* (Skt. "upper part of the head")—that is said to have

4. *Hiṅgulāyāṃ tathā 'ṣṭamyāmiṣe māsi site śubhe/śrīdurgāpratimāṃ dṛṣṭvā karoti janmakhaṇḍanam//*(*śrīkṛṣṇajanmakhaṇḍa*, 76.21). Sen translates this as the "pilgrimage of vermillion," hence literally translating "*hiṅgula*" as vermillion (Sen 1974, 383). Aside from its semantically questionable content, in my opinion, the translation is inaccurate as the rest of the chapter in the *BVP* clearly describes the merits of visiting certain holy places.

5. The names "Koṭṭarī," "Koṭṭavī," and "Koṭṭari" refer to a naked woman in Sanskrit, which again would hint at the possibility of an anthropomorphic figure—that of a naked woman (maybe giving birth) seen in the stone clusters (Skt. *piṇḍī*) and worshipped as the shrine's *sanctum sanctorum*. Interpretations of the image at the temple are presented at length in Chapter 5. About the Goddess Koṭṭavī, compare Agrawala (1964, 137–138).

fallen there (Sircar 1973, 85).[6] The shrine's association with this part of Satī's body, often used to assert the primacy of Hinglaj, is drawn from the famous myth of the Goddess's dismembering. The story is frequently heard at the shrine today and thus, prior to the discussion of the *Pīṭhanirṇaya*, deserves some attention here.

In mythological times, the great Goddess incarnated into the body of Sati, the daughter of the king Daksha. Sati wanted to marry the God Shiva, but her father did not approve of the marriage, which he thought unfit for a princess. Against her father's will, Sati nonetheless married Shiva. Then one day, Daksha performed a sacrificial ceremony, the *aśvamedha* (Skt.), to which he invited every god in the pantheon—except Shiva. Sati was deeply upset by her husband's humiliation, and to express her anger, she jumped into the sacrificial fire prepared for the ritual. When Shiva heard of this, he was furious and called upon his armies to interrupt the sacrifice in order to kill Daksha, who was responsible for Satī's death. After the king was dead, Shiva took his wife's burnt body in his arms and, wild with grief, began to dance the *tāṇḍava* (Skt.), a frantic dance that threatened to destroy the whole world. To save the universe and to relieve Shiva from his pain, the God Vishnu took his discus and cut Satī's body into many parts that fell out of Shiva's arms and scattered all over the subcontinent. In each place where a part of Satī's body fell, the soil became holy, and soon the places became known as *śākta pīṭha* (Skt.), or seats of the Goddess's power.

This version forms the core of a story frequently told by visitors at the shrine, although Vishnu's intervention is sometimes omitted; in this version, the wild motion of Shiva's dance alone caused the body's dismemberment. Sircar writes that one of the first versions of this narrative is found in the *Mahābhārata* (section XII, chapters 282–283), with variations evolving in the *Kumārasaṃbhava* of Kalidasa in the fourth or fifth century CE and later in the *Bhāgavata* (section IV, chapter 5, verse 20–21) and the *Kālikā Purāṇa* (section XVII, verse 42–49) (Sircar 1973, 5–7). In the earlier version, we only learn of the characters Sati and Daksha; it is not until the later *Purāṇas* that the humiliation of Satī's husband by her father and the murder of Daksha by Shiva become crucial to the story. The association of the Goddess's limbs with certain places of worship is the latest development, having originated no earlier than the fourteenth or fifteenth century (Sircar 1973, 6n3). Over time, different texts provide different figures for the number of associated holy places,

6. Apte translates the *brahmarandhra* as "an aperture on the crown of the head through which the soul is said to escape on its leaving the body" (Apte 1992).

and eventually, fifty-one *śākta pīṭha* are enumerated in the *Pīṭhanirṇaya*, also called the *Mahāpīṭhanirūpaṇa*.

The *Pīṭhanirṇaya* (*PN*) is commonly associated with the older *Tantracūḍāmaṇi*, with the former often considered a part of the latter. The claim that the upper part of the Goddess's head fell at Hinglaj is frequently cited as evidence of the site's importance, with literature about Hinglaj mentioning the *Tantracūḍāmaṇi* as the source of this claim (Lakhavat 2011, 23; Sharma 2011, 78; Samaur 1999, 503). Other texts, such as the *Śabdakalpadruma* (1822–1852) and the *Prāṇatoṣaṇī Tantra* (1820), also quote the *Tantracūḍāmaṇi* in their description of the fifty-one seats of power (Sircar 1973, 3). Banerji ascribes the work, also known by the name "*Śāktakrama*," to the writer Purnananda Giri, dating it to around the year 1571 (Banerji 2007, 191). He does not name his source, but it is possible that his 2007 book simply draws the date from the 1963 work by Chakravarti, who provides the same date for the text (Chakravarti 1963, 67). Datta also quotes the *Tantracūḍāmaṇi*, listing "Hiṅgulā" first among the fifty-one *pīṭhas*. In a footnote, however, he admits that the version of the *Tantracūḍāmaṇi* he quoted was taken from the *PN* (Datta 2009, 161n28). If these dates are correct, the association of Hinglaj with the Goddess's *brahmarandhra* could be as late as the sixteenth century. The *Tantracūḍāmaṇi* seems to have disappeared today; only Sircar mentions an existing copy of this manuscript in the library of the Royal Asiatic Society in Calcutta, which he asserts also provides a list of *pīṭhas* (Sircar 1973, 4).[7] However, Sircar also writes that this list "has little to do with the text of the *Pīṭhanirṇaya*" (Sircar 1973, 4). Sircar determines that the ascription of the *PN* to the *Tantracūḍāmaṇi* has no real foundation, seeing his claim supported by the diversity of names given as sources of the *PN* (Sircar 1973, 4). According to him, the *Pīṭhanirṇaya* probably followed the *Kubjikā Tantra*, but he does not specify the extent to which this influence could be imagined (Sircar 1973, 39). Sircar concludes that the *PN* must have been composed between the years 1690 and 1720 (Sircar 1973, 24). Thus, it cannot be definitely proven that claims to Hinglaj's primacy among the *śākta pīṭha* due to its association with the Goddess's *brahmarandhra* are older than the given time frame of the *PN*.

Which part of the Goddess's body fell at Hinglaj, however, is also not fully consistent in the literature. The *Caṇḍīmaṅgala* (*CM*), written by the

7. Unfortunately, I was not able to obtain a copy of this text at the Royal Asiatic Society in 2009. Omkar Lakhavat, who also quotes the text in his book, *Hiṃg'lāj Śaktipīṭh* (Lakhavat 2011, 23), was the only person I met who claimed to have a copy of this version of the *Tantracūḍāmaṇi*; he repeatedly assured me that he had it at his home library, but unfortunately, he was not able to locate it.

sixteenth-century Bengali poet Mukundarama, claims that a different part of Satī's body fell at Hinglaj than was identified in the *PN*. The author names nine *pīṭhas*, claiming that Hinglaj was where the Goddess's navel fell (Sircar 1973, 33).[8] This could be a textual version of a similar idea found at Hinglaj today, where people—admittedly in the minority—argue that since the womb (Hin. *garbha*), in the form of a tunnel into the mountain, is found under the image at Hinglaj, above it can only be a part of her belly (see Chapter 5). These narratives connect to the central ritual practice at the shrine in which pilgrims crawl through a small tunnel, signifying the womb of the Goddess from which they are born again. Before a pilgrim is permitted to enter this tunnel, he or she has to follow a rigid pattern of purification and worship.

Support for the interpretation found in the *PN* is often claimed to be evident in the etymology of the name Hinglaj, which relates to the Sanskrit word "*hiṅgula*" (also *hiṅguli, hiṅgulu*), meaning "vermillion" or "cinnabar."[9] It is said that as a pious, married Hindu woman, Sati wore vermillion (Hin. "*siṃdūr*") in her hair, and, hence, after the upper part of her head fell in Balochistan, the place became known as Hiṅgula, which eventually was changed to Hinglaj (Billimoria 1944, 93).[10]

In summary, a wide variety of texts—some with possibly quite early origins—mention Hinglaj. Due to the divergent scholarly opinions about the exact dates of these works, however, the first mention of the name Hinglaj in the Sanskrit literature can only be estimated to have occurred between the ninth and fifteenth centuries.[11] The association with the Goddess Satī's *brahmarandhra*, however, and the notion of Hinglaj as the primary *pīṭha* first appeared in the *Pīṭhanirṇaya*, which, according to Sircar, dates to sometime between 1690 and 1720 (Sircar 1973, 24). The reference to the site in an older *Tantracūḍāmaṇi*, often mentioned in today's literature about Hinglaj, cannot be seen as conclusive.

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8. In a footnote, however, Sircar admits to defects in the text that prevent the name "Hiṅglāja" from being fully determinable (Sircar 1973, 33n2).

9. For a different interpretation, see Billimoria (1944, 104).

10. Another interesting lead is that the term *hiṅgu* (Skt.; Hin. also, *hīṃg* or *hiṃgu*) also means *asafoetida*, a plant used frequently in cooking and found in the desert area around Hinglaj. Compare here Eggermont (1975, 60–61).

11. Support for the assumption that the name did not arise before the eleventh century is found in Desai's study on the image of Hiṅghalāja in Khajuraho. Following linguistic traces, and with the help of H. C. Bhayani, Desai concludes that the word Hiṅghalāja could not have originated earlier than the eleventh century (Desai 2013, 113f.).

2.3 *Hinglaj as Caste and Clan Goddess*

Discussions about the earliest occurrence of the name "Hinglaj" in Sanskrit sources have, arguably, a limited influence on the perception of the Goddess among visitors at the shrine today. Sanskrit certainly has a strong symbolic value for Pakistani (and Indian) devotees, but the actual content of many of the aforementioned texts is often secondary. On the other hand, more recent writings about the shrine in Gujarati, Hindi, Sindhi, and Urdu have had a significant influence on the practices and myths at Hinglaj. Such texts were often composed by devotees who worship the Goddess as their clan or caste deity (Hin. *kul'devī*), and therefore, they promote a particular understanding of the tradition. With regard to the shrine in Balochistan, members of the Brahmakshatriya, Charan, Kapri, and Lohana communities in particular have produced ritual manuals, mytho-historical narratives, travelogues, video documentations, institutions, and other material that has influenced the course of events at Hinglaj lately. These communities and their particular relationships to the Goddess will be introduced next.

2.3.1 Legitimizing Origins: Khatris and Brahmakshatriyas

The Khatri communities are spread widely across South Asia (Singh 1996, 548) and are traditionally associated with certain types of trade and money-lending (Singh 1998, 1721). Some of these Khatri communities also call themselves "Brahmakshatria" (also Brahma Kshatriya [*brahmakṣatriya*] and Brahma Khatri [*brahmakhatrī*]), a name that highlights a particular "mytho-historic" genealogy among the Khatris and that links the community's ancestors to the former aristocrats and ruling classes, the Kshatriyas or Rajputs, and also to the Goddess Hinglaj. These claims have sparked significant controversy in the past and remain under discussion. It is important to note that categories of identity always embody a certain kind of reduction. Such caste names—in the form of *jāti* or *varṇa*—are best understood as political instruments (as will be demonstrated) and thus malleable.

Markovits describes the Khatris as a merchant and banker community influential in the city of Shikarpur (Sindh) in the nineteenth century (Markovits 2000, 60). According to Markovits, the Khatris—together with the Lohanas and the Bhatias—were the main merchants in the city and maintained business contacts from the Volga River to Calcutta (Markovits 2000, 60).[12] This

12. Markovits writes that the Khatris made up only 5 percent of the merchant population of Shikarpur, with the Lohanas comprising the largest part (Markovits 2000, 63).

historical background speaks to the close contact between certain Khatri and Lohana communities in the western part of the subcontinent (Cook 2010, 135). The community itself claims that "Khatri" is a derivative of "Kshatriya," hence their relation to the Rajput communities (Singh 1998, 1721). Support for the relationship is also said to be found in mythological times: community members claim that to avenge the killing of his father, Parashurama, the sixth avatar of Vishnu, swore to rid the earth of all Kshatriyas, which forced them into hiding. According to the tale, the Kshatriya kings had to adopt the pseudonym "Khatri" to escape the wrath of Parashurama (Mohidden 2003, 670).[13]

The *People of India* series, published in the 1990s—a version of the census introduced by the British and unfortunately reproducing the worst aspects of colonial ethnography—describes the Brahma Khatris as a "division" or a "subgroup" of the Khatri community (Singh 1996, 1444). The Brahmakshatriyas, too, link themselves to the narrative of Parashurama and thus claim aristocratic descent. However, while not all members of the Khatri community relate to Hinglaj according to this claim, the Brahmakshatriya branch in particular explains its genealogy through the intervention of the Goddess in Balochistan.[14] This core narrative is provided below. Other narratives claim that the Kshatriya rulers began referring to themselves as Brahmakshatrias in the twelfth century to avoid the conversion to Islam by Muslim invaders (Mohidden 2003, 670). To understand and date these accounts of the Khatri and the Brahma Khatri communities—and thus to explore the mytho-historic narratives surrounding their relationship with Hinglaj—one must first understand colonial politics in relation to caste and Hindu identity in the nineteenth century.

With the expanding British influence and power in the subcontinent, the colonizers increasingly sought to categorize the various castes, ethnicities, and communities of South Asia. For the Hindu religions,[15] such taxonomies

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13. For a full description of the narrative, see Gail (1977).

14. This separation, in fact, is not completely clear in the literature available to me. Although in Khatri's text, the description "Khatri" is mainly equivalent to Brahmakshatriya (Khatri 1973), the recent census distinguishes between the two and defines the latter as a division of the former (Mohidden 2003; Singh 1998). The work of Bhamvarlal Jareca, largely informing this chapter, does not, however, draw a distinction between the Khatris and the Brahmakshatriyas (Jareca n.d.). Omkar Lakhavat also does not distinguish between the two communities (Lakhavat 2011, 129). In my own experience, however, today it is not possible to simply equate these two names. While most Brahmakshatriyas I met identified with the category Khatri, the reverse is not always true. Thus, I think it is best to follow Singh (1996) here and understand the Brahmakshatriyas as a particular branch of the numerous Khatri communities.

15. There are many works that hint at the entanglement of British and local informants in the production of what is generally understood today as "Hinduism." Since this is not the

were often produced on the basis of the *Dharmaśāstra*, a corpus of Sanskrit texts that separate Hindu communities into four hierarchical *varṇas* (Skt. color), with the Brahmins on top, followed by the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas, and the Shudras. Discussions concerning one's *varṇa* were sharpened by the fact that the colonial law courts decided questions of family law on the basis of Brahmin interpretations of these Sanskrit sources. Traditionally, Hindu law suggested a different procedure for the three "twice born" *varṇas* (Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas) than for the fourth group (Shudras). This, of course, was also valid for those who were not even included in this taxonomy and were later subsumed under the term "Dalit." While before the coming of the colonial power such issues had been dealt with locally in village courts, the (urban) British courts often sought to determine a litigant's *varṇa* before they could rule on certain questions (Carroll 1978, 237–238). Furthermore, in light of the colonial administration's preparation in 1901 for a new census, many groups aspired to present themselves in a different and more favorable light to gain a better position in this official account. By determining questions of law and possible job prospects, a community's classification was far from a superficial category, instead exerting a very tangible impact on the group's social and financial status (Carroll 1978, 233). Merchant groups that had gained influence under the British Raj, in particular, fervently sought to prove their caste's descent from a higher level in the hierarchy by means of various genealogies. Specifically, they claimed a Kshatriya origin and rejected a Vaishya *varṇa*.[16]

H. H. Risley, the commissioner in charge of the 1901 census, planned to conduct new research into the social hierarchies for British India. Risley was a staunch believer in anthropometrics and saw India as a perfect environment for his studies since, in his thinking, the "races" on the subcontinent had not mixed to the same extent as they had in Europe (Dirks 2001, 214). Risley believed strict marriage codes in the subcontinent had helped to preserve the physical characteristics of the different races, which made their classification more obvious (Dirks 2001, 214). Further, Risley studied the caste taxonomies of British India by asking colonial officers to submit forms classifying the various communities according to their ability to enter temples or

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topic of this study, I will simply refer here to a few influential works (Sen 1993; Kopf 1969; Dirks 2001; King 1999).

16. Burton also confirms the unusual use of the term "Vaishiya" in Sindh, which is mainly applied "in a limited sense to signify operatives and mechanics, opposed to merchants and shopkeepers" (Burton 1851, 237).

according to their relationship to Brahmins. His aim to restructure the census of 1901 on the basis of this method led to a wave of petitions by communities who felt misunderstood by the colonial power.

Among other communities, the Khatris also wanted to prove their Kshatriya origin, fighting for a better ranking in the new census. Dirks writes:

> Risley noted several major struggles, including an attempt by Khatris of the Punjab and United Provinces to be classified as Rajputs [Kshatriyas] that was ultimately successful, asserting that these efforts vindicated his belief that "the sole test of social precedence . . . was native public opinion." (Dirks 2001, 222)

Such petitions included genealogies and "learned statements" by Brahmins whose status helped guarantee the origin or bloodline of certain communities.

Other groups, such as the Kayastha community, also struggled for acceptance by the British as belonging to the Kshatriya *varṇa*. Their campaign was sparked by the case *Raj Kumar Lal v. Biseshwar Dayal*, heard at the Calcutta High Court in 1884. The court held that a Kayastha man could not legally adopt his sister's son due to the declaration of the Kayasthas as Shudras in the 1891 census (Carroll 1978, 239). This mandate led to indignation and protest from other Kayastha communities as well as the production of pamphlets, genealogies, and publications with which the community attempted to prove its Kshatriya descent (Rowe 2007, 202). K. C. S. Varma highlights the discussion in the 1904 book, *Kshatriyas and Would-be Kshatriyas: A Consideration of the Claim of Certain Hindu Castes to Rank with Rajput, the Descendants of the Ancient Kshatriyas*:

> The Khatri who would fain rank himself with the Sesodias of Meywar, with the Jadus of Karauli, or with the Bhatis of Jaisalmere, still remains a Punjabi Bania; and no species of argument will ever transform the quill-driving caste of Kayasthas into a Rajput clan. It is rather late in the day for these would-be Kshatriyas to claim a higher status than that which for centuries past they have been entitled to, and have accepted without question. (cited in Rowe 2007, 204)

These and similar discussions were common in the early twentieth century, and they triggered waves of self-reflection and identity-searching in many communities. It is with this background that I will analyze

the mytho-historic corpus consolidating the genealogies of the Khatri, Brahmakshatriya, and associated communities through their relationship with the Goddess Hinglaj.[17]

The following story is a paraphrase of versions in three sources available to me:[18] the 1905 Gujarati text *Hiṃgulā Purāṇ*; a 1973 Sindhi book titled *Hinglāj Jī Yātrā*; and the Hindi work *Brahmakṣatriyotpatti Evaṃ Māṁ Hiṃgulāj*, a text that is not dated but that must have been published around the year 2006.[19] The core of the story in these texts appears to be virtually identical. Jareca and Shastri (in the *Hiṃgulā Purāṇ*, 1905) claim the *Skanda Purāṇa* to be the ancient origin for their texts.[20] The *Hiṃgulā Purāṇ* itself contains only a few Sanskrit verses at the beginning of every chapter, while the rest is written in Gujarati. Jareca's entire text is in Sanskrit and followed by a Hindi translation. The *Hiṃgulā Purāṇ* contains eighty-seven chapters and is separated into two parts. The first part deals with general Hindu mythology, philosophy, and ritual performances, and the second part attends to the story of Hinglaj, Parashurama, and the genealogy of the Brahmakshatriyas. The Sindhi text *Hinglāj Jī Yātrā* does not attempt to locate the story in any of the *Purāṇas*, but the author describes how the information used in his text was gathered in 1934 from a Hindi version of the *Hiṃgulā Purāṇ*, among other sources (Khatri 1973, 5). At this point, it is not possible for me to determine if these texts actually draw from a Sanskrit original that may have existed before the twentieth

17. The *Hiṃgulā Purāṇ*, for example, also asserts that the Bhats and the Bhanushali share the same genealogical roots. Chapter 86 is titled "The Origin of the Brahmakhatri, the Pushkarana, and the Bhati," which associates these three communities and provides them with the same genealogy. For some reason, Jareca's publication omits this heading, most likely because it directly addresses the Brahmakhatri community (Jareca n.d.). *Hinglāj Jī Yātrā* also associates the Ahir community with the Khatris (Khatri 1973).

18. All three texts highlight different aspects of the story, however this is not the place to analyze their relationship in detail. At this point, it is merely important to present a prominent story concerning Hinglaj that finds its textual solidification in these three books. A. P. Kshatriya also presents this story in his book (Kshatriya 2005) but does so in a rudimentary version starting at page 29.

19. Since the *Hiṃgulā Purāṇ* is available to me in a translation from Gujarati only, I chose to base the story mainly on my own translation from Hindi/Sanskrit as it is found in the work of Jareca. This is supported with interpolations from the Sindhi work not mentioned in Jareca's text.

20. Jareca, however, begins the narrative of Jasyasena with chapter 77 (Jareca n.d., 1), while Shastri, claiming to be the translator of the *Hiṃgulā Purāṇ*, states that the story begins with chapter 79 (Shastri 1905, 258) of the said text. I have, however, not been able to locate the text passages in any of the *Skanda Purāṇa* editions available to me. Thus, according to my research, the *Hiṃgulā Purāṇ* did not appear in writing before the twentieth century. Other texts presenting the same story are even more recent.

century and gone missing today, or if they all use the *Hiṃgulā Purāṇ* (printed in 1905) as their source.[21]

2.3.1.1 The Story of the Brahmakshatriyas

In his quest to find and kill all the Kshatriyas on earth, Parashurama eventually arrives in the province of Sindh. He stays there for some time, killing as many Kshatriyas as possible. The mighty king Ratnasena, the ruler of Sindh, decides to escape the wrath of Parashurama by fleeing into the jungle with his five wives. All the wives are pregnant, making escape particularly difficult for them. The sound of wild animals is audible everywhere, and the king and his wives soon become exhausted and filled with despair. When they arrive in the area of the Sarasvati River's source, they catch sight of a small forest, which is home to the sage Dadhichi, a Brahmin of the Saraswat lineage. The sage has decorated the ashram, and, due to his spiritual power, even the wild animals live there in peace. When Ratnasena sees Dadhichi, he tells him about the situation in Sindh and the wrath of the warrior-god Parashurama. The sage feels sympathy for them and promises to protect the king, his wives, and the soon-to-be born offspring.

After some time in the sage's hermitage, Ratnasena's wives give birth to five sons, whom they name Jayasena, Binduman, Vishala, Chandrashala, and Bharata. The years pass quickly, and the boys grow older and befriend the sons of the Brahmin sages. Ratnasena, however, becomes increasingly restless in the hermitage, eager for news of the outside world and Parashurama's oath. Dadhichi tells him that Parashurama would not rest until he had rid the earth of the Kshatriyas, but as long as Ratnasena and his family remained in the ashram and its protective forest, they would be safe from Parashurama's arrows.

One day the king goes hunting and he catches sight of an enormous pig. He skillfully strikes it with an arrow, but the wounded pig flees, and Ratnasena chases after it. When the exhausted king finally stops chasing his prey, he looks around and realizes that he has left Dadhichi's forest. Suddenly, he sees Parashurama right in front of him. Ratnasena tries to flee—but in vain. One of Parashurama's arrows pierces the king's heart, and he dies on the spot.

When Ratnasena does not return from hunting, his wives become worried, and so the sage Dadhichi sends his students to search for the king. Soon his Brahmin disciples find the dead body of Ratnasena outside the forest and

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21. The mere fact that Jareca prints a Sanskrit text he proclaims as ancient does not necessarily prove that the text is not a Sanskrit translation of an older Gujarati version. This assertion stems from the fact that I have not been able to find the *Hiṃgulā Khaṇḍa* anywhere, nor have I ever met anyone who has laid hands on this version of the *Skanda Purāṇa*.

return with the terrible news. Ratnasena's wives are so grief-stricken that they decide to follow their husband into death, throwing themselves on the pyre. After the five young princes, now orphans, have completed all the necessary rituals for their deceased parents, they beg Dadhichi to shelter them. The sage accepts, and the princes continue living with him for many years.

Time passes, and one day, the warrior Parashurama reaches the gates of Dadhichi's hermitage. The sage welcomes him with all honors. Parashurama looks around the hermitage and asks about the identity of the young men studying there. Dadhichi lies to Parashurama and tells him that these young men were the sons of Brahmins. Greeted with Parashurama's skepticism, the sage invites him to test them. Parashurama agrees, but first leaves the hermitage to perform his necessary rituals at the River Sarasvati. In the meantime, the sage Dadhichi gives each of the five princes a *yajñopavīta* [Skt. sacred thread worn by Brahmins] and tells them to recite the Veda as he has taught them over the years. When Parashurama comes back, he prompts them to present their knowledge of the holy scriptures. The princes recite the sacred texts, and Parashurama is very impressed. He still has some doubts, however, and so Dadhichi takes a plate from which he eats a meal together with the princes. What Parashurama has not noticed, however, is that Dadhichi had drawn a little line on the plate to separate the food into two parts. Parashurama is now convinced that the princes are actual Brahmins, and so he says to Dadhichi: "Give me your oldest son. I will teach him how to use weapons!" So Dadhichi gives Parashurama the oldest of the five, Jayasena, who leaves with Parashurama, the murderer of his father, to wander along the shores of the River Ganges. Jayasena stays for twelve years with Parashurama, whom he worships as a teacher. Parashurama is very pleased with Jayasena and teaches him his secret art of weaponry.

One day Parashurama becomes very tired from the heat, and so he decides to take a nap on Jayasena's lap. When Parashurama is deep asleep, Jayasena becomes curious and wants to test his new martial skills for the first time. So the young prince fires all the weapons the way he has been taught by Parashurama. This presentation of Jayasena's power is so terrible that the gods in heaven become frightened and go for help to Indra, the king of all gods. They report to Indra that Jayasena has become almost invincible because he was taught the Veda by Dadhichi and has now also acquired the skills of weaponry from Parashurama. Indra, fearing for his place as the king of gods, devises a trick: he disguises himself as a bumblebee and flies down to earth. There, he lands on Jayasena's thigh and stings the prince, drawing blood. Jayasena, however, a staunch devotee of Parashurama, does not want to wake his master and so stabilizes his mind and ignores the pain. Indra then flies to

the ear of Parashurama and bites him so forcefully that he wakes up. When Parashurama sees the blood on Jayasena's lap and notices that he has been sitting there ignoring the pain, he realizes that Jayasena cannot be a Brahmin but must be a Kshatriya. So Parashurama says to Jayasena: "Someone who can bear such pain cannot be a Brahmin but must be a Kshatriya! Now tell me, who are you?" Jayasena at last admits to the deception, saying: "Oh Master, you know everything! By the grace of the sage Dadhichi I am a Brahmin, but I am also a Kshatriya. Now my life is only at your mercy!" Parashurama hesitates, thinking: "If I kill Jayasena, then I will be guilty of killing a Brahmin, but if I let him live, then I will not fulfill my oath of ridding the earth of all the Kshatriyas. What can I do with Jayasena, the Brahmakshatriya?" After considering his quandary for some time, Parashurama says: "You certainly are a Kshatriya, but you became a Brahmin, and now you are also my disciple. So, I have decided not to kill you but rather to put a curse on you! You will forget all that I have taught you, and from now on, you and your ancestors will be known to the world as Brahmakshatriyas!" When Jayasena hears this, he falls to the guru's feet and calls his name over and over, but Parashurama turns away and advises Jayasena only to search for the sage Dadhichi and follow his teachings.

When Jayasena reaches Dadhichi's ashram, his brothers are overwhelmed with joy. Jayasena tells them about Parashurama's curse and says to Dadhichi: "Master, you taught us the Veda; now you should lead the way as our guru!" Dadhichi accepts and tells the five princes that his lineage, which sprang from the Sarasvati River, will continue to serve the ancestors of the five princes. To seal this arrangement, however, the five princes must go to the shrine of Hinglaj to be initiated into her tradition. So the princes fast, become initiated into the mantra of the Goddess Hinglaj, and then set out on the pilgrimage to the Goddess's abode.

Having undertaken the pilgrimage, they cross the River Gandki and then travel on to Narayanpur to worship the Goddess Ashapura. Dadhichi and the princes next pass through Nagar Sthan [Thatta], reaching the five wells; they then proceed to Chandrakup, where they take a bath and present a gift of 60,000 cows to the local Brahmins. Later they reach Karavirak, in the middle of the Hingol River, where they fast and meditate for six years.[22]

After this lengthy period, they eventually ascend the mountain at Hinglaj, where they fast and meditate for another twelve years. At the end of the

22. The description of the pilgrimage is different in all three texts. This paragraph mentions only the main stops present in almost all the sources.

twelfth year, the Mother appears in front of them and grants them a wish. Jayasena stands up and requests the Mother Goddess to lift Parashurama's horrible curse, but the Goddess replies: "How could the words of the mighty Parashurama become a lie? But I will help you and do what is possible." Hinglaj instructs the princes in worshipping her as their clan Goddess [Hin. *kul'devī*] and adds that he who enters her cave will gain the *dharma* of an ascetic. She furthermore advises them to always worship the Saraswat Brahmins. She tells the princes that they would be able to use their weapons as long as they live, but, at a certain point, their descendants would forget the art of weaponry. The Devi guarantees, however, that even without weapons, their descendants would be prosperous and fortunate in the future. After this promise, Dadhichi and the princes leave the Goddess's abode.

Eventually, all five princes have sons of their own and initiate them into the tradition of Hinglaj Devi. Then Jayasena and his brothers leave the mundane world behind, retreating into the jungle to meditate until they reach salvation. As promised by Hinglaj, the princes' descendants become very successful and populate all parts of the earth. After many generations, when the successors have already forgotten the curse of Parashurama, however, the two brothers Viduratha and Shrutasena are engaged in battle against the barbarians. Suddenly, in the middle of the fight, their arrows begin turning into grasslike sticks. The brothers see that their weapons have become useless against the enemy, and they remember Parashurama's curse, realizing that his wrath has finally reached them. So the kings decide to leave all of their wealth behind and hide with their families in the jungle. There they worship the Goddess Ashapura for twelve years until she finally appears in front of them. She recounts to Viduratha and Shrutasena their ancestors' story in detail, explaining to them their present situation. After learning the fate of their forefathers, the kings are devastated and ask the Goddess: "If the weapons are useless now, how should we make a living?" The Goddess tells them that they are now Brahmakshatriyas and that their weapons will never be useful again. She calls Vishvakarman, the architect of the universe, who advises the despairing kings about their future. Vishvakarman instructs them in producing red color, printing cloth, and selling goods, with the exception of ghee, honey, and oil.[23] He also tells them that although they can no longer use weapons themselves, they should now utilize their Kshatriya knowledge to sell them to others. Thus, the

23. This, again, is different in the *Hiṃgulā Purāṇ*, where Vishvakarman advises the princes to sell liquids (except oil), to sell grains, and to produce weapons (see chapter 89). The book *Hinglāj Jī Yātrā* does not mention any particular occupational advice (pp. 88–89).

descendants of the five cursed princes spread all over the world and achieve prosperity through trade and cloth printing.

2.3.1.2 The Genealogy of the Brahmakshatriya Community

This story connects the particular history of the Khatri and Brahmakshatriya communities to mythological times and, thereby, to central *topoi* of a broader Hindu discourse. The fate of the five princes is linked to an era when Parashurama, the sixth avatar of Vishnu, wandered the earth and fought against unrighteous kings and warriors. Parashurama thus becomes a crucial yet ambiguous agent in the history of the (Brahma) Khatris. His story is found in many different variations all over the subcontinent; Adallbert Gail, who published a monograph exclusively on Parashurama, writes at one point: "The content of the Parashurama story is a clear case in point of how an old and formerly local story remains alive by moving through India being adapted to various local traditions" (Gail 1977, 206). Hence, with local adaptations of the Parashurama theme, the story is reiterated, and local aspects are associated with a wider socioreligious discourse. The association is bolstered through the claim that this narrative is part of the eighteen *Purāṇas*, namely the *Skanda Purāṇa*; I have not been able to verify this claim.[24]

This relationship between the Khatris and Parashurama is complex and conflicted. On the one hand, Parashurama is responsible for the death of the king Ratnasena and the subsequent suicide of the five princes' mothers. But on the other hand, Parashurama is also the guru of Jayasena who initiates him into the art of weaponry. Parashurama, thus, poses a threat to the lineage of the Kshatriyas but is also ultimately responsible for the creation and prosperity of the Brahmakshatriya community. This ambivalent relationship is addressed by Jareca in his book *Brahmakṣatriyotpatti Evaṃ Māṅ Hiṃgulāj*; he writes that instead of worshipping Parashurama, the community should honor the sage Dadhichi, who ensured their survival (Jareca n.d., 140).

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24. The narrative shows interesting parallels to the Karna myth in the *Mahābhārata*. There, it is Karna who approaches Parashurama to learn from him the perfection of weaponry in the form of the *brahmā* weapon. To do so, he disguises himself as a member of the sage Bhrgu's family. Parashurama accepts Karna as his disciple and teaches him. One day when Parashurama is very tired, he falls asleep in Karna's lap. As Parashurama sleeps, an insect crawls onto Karna's thigh and bites him. Karna, however, holds completely still so as not to wake his master. When Parashurama awakes and sees the insect, the creature shows itself to be a demon in disguise who was cursed by the sage Bhrgu. Parashurama releases the demon from this curse but also sees the bloody thigh of Karna and realizes that Karna cannot be a Brahmin. Parashurama curses Karna, foretelling that he will forget the powerful knowledge of the *brahmā* weapon in the moment when he will need it the most (compare chapters 2 and 3 of the *Śānti Parva*).

Furthermore, the story of the five princes explains the rupture between the glorious past and the present state of the (Brahma) Khatri community. Divine intervention caused the start of the decline, which eventually forced them into trade. Their fate is thus part of a divine game; their fall from the ruling class to the status of (mere) traders is not the community's fault but rather the will of the gods. The pilgrimage of Hinglaj also plays a significant role within this plot: it is here where the divine and the mundane meet and where the humans can exercise some agency over their fate, eventually even altering the course of the curse. Notwithstanding the power of Parashurama, a mighty incarnation of the God Vishnu, through the pilgrimage to Hinglaj, the princes are able to modify his curse. After witnessing their devotion, the Goddess and Vishvakarman personally advise the princes to become merchants and even advise them of the specific kind of business they should engage in. The story assures that the Brahma Khatris are both mighty kings by blood and prosperous merchants by the will of the gods.

This mytho-historic narrative can now be approached from a different angle by taking into account Foucault's reading of Nietzsche. In his article "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" (1977), Foucault suggests an inversion of historical research. Instead of beginning at some distant point in the past and trying to follow its traces into the present, Foucault suggests analyzing how supposed past events are rearticulated to fit into a present framework. This entails refuting a historiography, which is characterized by a search for origins and must fill unknowable parts of the story with the imagination of the historian. With this as his foundation, Foucault criticizes what he understands to be the traditional approach to historiography, that is, a search for unknown "chimeras of origin" (Foucault 1977, 144). He writes at one point:

> Genealogy does not pretend to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of forgotten things; its duty is not to demonstrate that the past actively exists in the present, that it continues secretly to animate the present, having imposed a predetermined form to all its vicissitudes. (Foucault 1977, 146)

Foucault's genealogical approach requires starting with present circumstances and must therefore refuse to engage in any kind of metaphysical reasoning.

Keeping this in mind, the work containing the text about the Brahma Khatris' origin becomes central to the narrative's analysis. Here, the publication *Brahmakṣatriyotpatti Evaṃ Māṁ Hiṃgulāj*, in which the Hindi/Sanskrit version of the story is embedded, becomes a useful source. The book was written and published by the author Bhamvarlal Jareca, who was supported by

the donations of the Khatri community in Rajasthan. In a personal conversation with him, Jareca mentioned that it was his intention to share information concerning the *jāti's* origin with his fellow community members.[25] Aside from short narratives about the Devi, the book also contains devotional songs (Hin. *bhajan*) and ritual manuals for the worship of the Goddess (Jareca n.d., 116–137). The author also provides details about the activities of the "*brahmakṣatriya samāj*," an organization aiming to preserve the traditions of the Khatri community (Jareca n.d., 155). The largest portion of the book, however, is the story, in Sanskrit and Hindi, about the (Brahma) Khatris' ancestors.

As discussed above, the Khatris, among many other merchant communities, sought to improve their *varṇa* status by writing petitions to H. H. Risley, the commissioner in charge of the 1901 census. Considering these movements around the turn of the twentieth century as historical background, the text bears another kind of importance. The fastidious history of the Khatris—particularly visible in chapter 83 of Jareca's book, chapter 85 in the *Hiṃgulā Purāṇ*, and throughout the *Hinglāj Jī Yātrā*—seeks to connect the present with the glorious past of the Kshatriya kings of mythological times. The text creates a genealogical sequence, offering continuity in the transmission of history and thereby supporting a (present) political claim to upward social mobility. Through this work, the Khatris, originally described as members of the Vaishya *varṇa* (Baines 1893, 201), hold proof of their aristocratic descent and thus legitimize their claim of belonging to the Kshatriya group.[26]

The historian Rowe writes that during these processes of attempted upward social mobility, many—often "low-ranking"—Brahmins had a symbiotic relationship with the castes seeking to alter their status, especially the Khatri community. Such Brahmin groups supported claims of higher lineage in the form of "learned opinions" (Rowe 2007, 203).[27] Because the Saraswat Brahmins, the ritual experts in the service of the Khatris, the Lohanas, and other communities (Lachaier 2008, 84)[28] also gained from this promotion of

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25. From a personal conversation in March 2008. During our talk, Jareca did not distinguish between the Brahmakshatriyas and the Khatris; for him, the communities are one and the same.

26. Such attempts of upward social mobility by lower castes (classes) are not particular to this case study, but similar cases have already been documented in the work of M. N. Srinivas (1989).

27. K. C. S. Varma called Brahmins who were in the service of such lower classes "hired mercenaries" (quoted in Rowe 2007, 203).

28. Burton mentions that many of these Saraswat Brahmins were considered low caste and were also called "Sindhur," from the vermillion *ṭīkā* (Hin. mark on the forehead),

the *baniyā* (Hin. merchant) castes to the higher *varṇas*, it is possible that the aforementioned text centering around the Goddess Hinglaj was produced for this exact purpose—as a "learned opinion" in this time of upward social mobility.[29] Taken as a given, this would also explain the repeated demand found in the texts—uttered by different deities such as Hinglaj or Vishvakarman—to always respect the Saraswat Brahmins. Furthermore, a part of the *Hiṃgulā Purāṇ* not mentioned in Jareca's work recalls the origins of the Saraswat Brahmins in detail. In the text, they are associated with a drought on earth and the birth of the rain God Indra (Shastri 1905, 233–237). These chapters discuss the history of the Saraswat community extensively and, hence, connect their origin to a mytho-historic time frame similar to that of the (Brahma) Khatris.

The Khatri community eventually prevailed in their struggle for a revision to their caste classification; the colonial commissioners ultimately recognized the Khatris as belonging to the Kshatriya *varṇa*. Evidence of the decision is found in Jareca's work immediately following the story of the Brahmakshatriyas' genealogy. The book reprints one of H. H. Risley's letters in its entirety, which in part reads:

> Without, however, pressing, [*sic*] this point, I may say at once that the evidence laid before me seems to make it clear that, in British India at any rate, the Khatris are generally believed to be the modern representatives of the Kshatriyas of Hindu tradition . . . . (Jareca n.d., 148)

A definite answer as to the presented mytho-historic text's exact date of production linking the Khatris to the former Kshatriaya kings cannot be offered here, but the printing of H. H. Risley's letter in Jareca officially recognizing the Kshatriya origin of the Brahmakshatriyas in the book (Jareca n.d., 144–148) shows the importance of this acknowledgment by the waned colonial power. There is no doubt that this recognition is still crucial for many within the community, which is the reason Jareca decided to publish the full document. The Goddess Hinglaj serves here as the community's creator and as

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which—according to legend—they had gotten from Ramacandra. Rama was in need of a priest and since he could not find any in Balochistan he simply applied a *ṭīkā* on a *mlecch's* (Hin. barbarian) forehead. These Saraswat Brahmins were known for their devotion to the Devi who, in most areas of Sindh, was called Hinglaj (Burton 1851, 312).

29. Unfortunately, I lack the expertise to locate the Sanskrit text by Jareca in a particular time period. My correspondence with Sanskrit experts—foremost with Harunaga Issacson—did, however, support my assessment. Professor Isaacson from the University of Hamburg estimated that the text was written in the past two or three centuries (from a personal email communication January 2, 2009).

the guarantor of "Kshatriyadom." Thus, the ongoing discussion about the "highly speculative" Khatri/Brahmakshatria identity (Singh 1998, 1721) is connected to two powerful and authoritative entities: Hinglaj, as divine assurance for the community's aristocratic bloodline (Foucault's metaphysical ground of history *par excellence*) and Risley, as the census commissioner for the British Raj.

2.3.2 Sons of the Devi: The Charan Community

Aside from Sanskrit sources and the writings of a few Brahma Khatri authors, there are many mytho-historic narratives of pastoral groups from the western Indian subcontinent—namely the Bharvar, the Rabari, and the Charan—that speak to the great age and influence of the Goddess Hinglaj's cult in this area. The Charan[30] in particular claim to have a special bond with Hinglaj in Balochistan, and the pilgrimage to her shrine at some point in one's life is mandatory for many of them (Westphal and Westphal-Hellbusch 1974, 311). Needless to say, this requirement became problematic with the separation of the subcontinent in 1947, which also resulted in new dynamics within the ritual expression of Charan communities. Notwithstanding the difficult relationship between the two countries, each year, several groups from India manage to obtain visas and travel to Pakistan to visit the shrine. As is portrayed in Chapter 4, this is a unique situation with interesting political and religious implications.

A mytho-historic relationship has long existed between the Charan communities and the local ruling class, which has carried a lasting impact on the traditions of the former. The particular combination of political and religious power between the two groups helped give rise to the *Charani Sagati* (Kamphorst 2008), a tradition of apotheosis, that is, the deification of Charan women, which continues today.[31] Many Charan men were employed as bards and poets, serving kings and aristocrats as genealogists and, even more significantly, assembling and composing the histories of their masters' dynasties. In this way, the Charan played an important role in the monarchs' reign. Their poetry connected the rulers of their day to those of mythological times, placing

30. The strong heterogeneity of the Charan *jāti* has led to an assumption that the only link between the pastoral communities, merchants, and bards of the caste is the shared name (Westphal and Westphal-Hellbusch 1976, 93).

31. Sharma mentions such incarnations also taking place in the Rajput and Bhati communities but simultaneously acknowledges the importance of the Charan communities for the Devi worship and the great number of *avatārīs* (Skt.) present in this *jāti* (Sharma 2011, 15).

current administrations inside a timeless *dharma* and thereby legitimizing the rulers' claims to power.

Charans were also warrantors for contracts, guaranteeing adherence to certain agreements between two parties with their lives. This was possible by threatening to commit *traga* (self-immolation), a practice where Charans wounded or even killed themselves or members of their community to show that injustice had been done and that the evildoer was directly responsible for the death of a Charan. The ghosts of the deceased were feared, especially those of females, because they embodied the horrific aspect of the Goddess. The threat of *traga* served as a guarantee for everyday agreements like loans or the settlement of disputes, but also for politically sensitive issues such as treaties made between two kings (Tambs-Lyche 2004). As an embodiment of *dharma*, the Charan community retained a powerful position that helped them develop a strong bond with local rulers, a connection that continues to exist today. This relationship between the Rajput clans and the Charan community was symbiotic in many ways. While the Charans legitimized Rajput authority by facilitating a connection to an eternal order, the Rajput were instrumental in the Charans' upward social mobility.

Many Charans claim that the Devi has an exceptionally close relation with their community and that she is their creator (Basu 2004, 182). Charans often say that when a boy is born into the community, a bell rings at the Hinglaj temple in Balochistan. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of every Charan male to visit the Goddess at Hinglaj before his 60th birthday; otherwise a rock will tumble down into the sacred valley, eventually burying the shrine. According to the community, the Goddess also grants Charan men the ability to write and compose stories and poems. She is their muse, and they imagine her sitting on a poet's tongue, quickening his creativity.

The women's relationship to the Goddess is even stronger: it is said that the Devi herself promised to incarnate as a Charan woman periodically in order to bring change and prosperity to the community. Such deified Charani (female) are considered full or partial incarnations of *śakti* (Skt. the divine female energy) and, according to Charan narratives, Hinglaj herself was once a Charani (Samaur 1999, 503). In fact, she is said to have been the first of countless incarnations of the Goddess in this world. Janet Kamphorst writes:

> I think it best to keep in mind that the attribution of the same heroic deeds and/or names to different Charani goddesses can be understood as a part of a narrative tradition that casts all Sagatis as forms of Hinglaj and/or major or minor incarnations of each other, and this means that,

> in the end, it is the Mahashakti Hinglaj herself who is credited with the heroic deeds of all her *avatārī*s. (Kamphorst 2008, 244)

This is also confirmed by Westphal and Westphal-Hellbusch, who claim that many Charan women who were exceptionally honored during their lifetime would eventually become important local Goddesses in areas where Charans lived (Westphal and Westphal-Hellbusch 1976, 167). Enthoven writes that "[s]everal of the most popular goddesses of North Gujarat are the spirits of Charan woman who sacrificed themselves to guard the privileges of their caste" (cited in Westphal and Westphal-Hellbusch 1976, 167). This circle of incarnations, the *Charani Sagati*,[32] has a long tradition in the west of the subcontinent, and it is from these communities that the "more important Goddesses" of the area emerge (Tambs-Lyche 2004, 124). This deification tradition still exists today; the most recent well-known incarnation the community speaks of is that of Charani Ai Shri Sonal Mataji, a social reformer who died in 1975. She supported the education of young women in her community, preached against alcohol abuse, and spread ideas that were inspired by the politics of Gandhi (Basu 2004, 199–207).[33]

However, the notion that Hinglaj is associated with the circle of *Charani Sagati* is also contested among Charans today. While some are proud to include Hinglaj into this circle of incarnations, thus making her a member of the Charan community, others are of the opinion that Hinglaj is the *ādiśakti*, the primordial divine power that can only ever partially incarnate into this mundane world.

Not many stories exist today that speak of a Charan woman whose life is associated with the Goddess Hinglaj, but the following few bits and pieces are told by Charans today. Samaur, for example, believes the Goddess's origins lie in the "*gaur'viyā cāraṇ*" branch from Thatta, a city in the south of Sindh. He writes that her father's name was Haridas and that this connection to Thatta led to the belief among the *saṃnyāsīs* (Hin. ascetics) of the Charan and the Udasin community that the temple in Thatta was as important as the main shrine in Balochistan (Samaur 1999, 503). Other scholars base their account of the "historical" Hinglaj on the work of P. P. Payaka, who published on this topic in *Cāraṇ-Baṃdhī* magazine in 1955. Currently, this article is only

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32. The spelling of this term, as a *terminus technicus*, is taken from Kamphorst (2008).

33. Besides such socially significant Charanis, there are also many women today who are considered smaller or larger incarnations of the Goddess. One of the bigger incarnations is Shayam Mata, whose followers I met in Barmer in 2011.

available in a reproduction by Westphal and Westphal-Hellbusch, who give the following account.

> Hala in Sindh was called Kohala in the former times, and the Goddess Hinglaj was once the queen of the Kohala or Kohana area. In this account, Hinglaj is portrayed as a Charani and the leader of the Tumbel Charan, whom she guided from Sindh to the Makran. P. P. Payaka also mentions that she remained a virgin all her life and was well versed in the religious texts (Westphal and Westphal-Hellbusch 1974, 315).

Kamphorst refers to similar sources, but in addition, she mentions that the woman's name was "Charani Deval" (Kamphorst 2008, 236). Kamphorst dates her appearance—and the beginning of the Devi tradition—to the eighth century (Kamphorst 2008. 236). According to Kamphorst, the Tumbel spread the Goddess's fame in Las Bela, and so Hinglaj decided to settle in a cave close to the Hingol River, where she has been worshipped by the Charan and other communities since as early as the ninth century (Kamphorst 2008, 237). According to Tambs-Lyche, Hinglaj could have been a part of a cult that originally began in the fifth century. He bases this assumption on the work of Colonel Tod, but also acknowledges that Tod's dating tends to be too early. Tambs-Lyche shows, however, that this time frame coincides somewhat with the coming of the *Devī Māhātmaya* to Rajasthan in the sixth or seventh century, and so a rough estimate between the fifth and seventh century could be an accurate guess (Tambs-Lyche 1999, 30n7).

To provide a more complete picture of this circle of incarnations, the *Charani Sagati*, I will describe two of the most famous incarnations of Hinglaj Devi, who both played an important role in the mytho-historic memory of the Charan and the establishment of certain Rajput kingdoms.

2.3.2.1 Avar Mata (Āvaṛ Mātā)

The Goddess Avar is worshipped as a full incarnation of Hinglaj Mata in many parts of Rajasthan and Gujarat (Samaur 1999, 508). There are numerous myths told about the Goddess Avar, but the present study will focus only on the most popular. According to one narrative, Avar was born in the year 888 CE in a village called Calkun in Barmer district, India (Samaur 1999, 508). She belonged to the Mahdu Charan community (Lakhavat 2011, 35), and her father was called Mamad (Samaur 1999, 508). It is said that Avar had six sisters who were famous for their beauty. Due to a famine in Rajasthan, the family was forced to go to Sindh, then ruled by Umar Sumra who had recently converted to Islam and was now known by the name of "Hamir." When the family arrived in his empire,

Hamir fell in love with the seven sisters and wanted to marry them. Their father, however, rejected the proposal, and so Hamir threatened to take the sisters by force. It was in this moment that Avar revealed herself as the Goddess, telling the family to take refuge in the Temra Hills. During their flight, they met Bakha, the buffalo demon whom Avar managed to kill after a long fight. The taste of the buffalo's blood sent the Goddess flying into a frenzy, and consequently, she set out to kill Hamir. She delivered her family to the safety of the Temra Hills and then went after the king. In the meantime, Hamir had occupied all the Charans' land with his army to force Mamad to change his mind. Avar united all the Charan against Hamir and began a *traga* ritual. She also went to the Samma and Bhati Rajput kings and asked them for help. Both lineages had wanted to occupy the Sindh for some time, and so they agreed to fight against Hamir. Avar led the army and succeeded in killing the tyrant. The Samma and the Bhati Rajput kings then divided the Sindh between them and ruled in peace.

Another story associates Avar with the coming of the Huns, dated to the eighth century by Samaur (Samaur 1999, 509). As a result of their cruelties, the local people called the Huns *daityas* (Hin. demons). It is said that Avar killed fifty-two of these Hun-demons ("*hūṃ rākṣas*") and so saved the people of Sindh (Samaur 1999, 509). The Charani Avar is portrayed in many other mytho-historic episodes, too, as a warrior and protector of the common people who helped bring kingdoms to power. Such *topoi* are often found among the *Charani Sagati* and show the close connection between the Rajput kingdoms and the Devi traditions.

The mytho-historic corpus around Avar Mata is a telling example for the general relationship between the local Charan communities and the former (Muslim) king. The king's occupation of the Charan lands is still vivid in the community's collective memory. Friction, suppression, and eventual release are motifs found in many such stories revolving around west Indian Goddesses.

2.3.2.2 Karni Mata (Karṇī Mātā)

Karni is generally seen as a partial incarnation of the *ādiśakti*. She married and even had children with Deval, who is considered to be an incarnation of Shiva.[34] Karni is said to be a disciple of Avar and shares the same characteristic influence upon the enemies of her *protégés* (Westphal and Westphal-Hellbusch 1976, 173–174). During her lifetime, she became an influential leader among the Charan and collected a huge number of cattle, which helped

34. This certainly is an exception among the *Charani Sagati*, who usually live in celibacy (Basu 2004, 191).

her to gain wealth and influence. The following is what is told today about the Goddess Karni.

While Karni's father was undertaking the pilgrimage to Hinglaj, the Goddess appeared to her mother and foretold the coming of the Devi. Karni lived at the end of the fifteenth century and soon revealed her divine nature through her miracles and influential charisma (Westphal and Westphal-Hellbusch 1976, 174). In those days, Rao Shekha was the ruler of the area, and it is said that with the blessing of the Goddess Karni, he was able to defeat his enemies and strengthen his rule (Tambs-Lyche 1999, 66). Karni also supported Ridmal, whose son Jodha later conquered Jodhpur. Bika Rathore, Jodha's younger son, received special patronage from Karni Mata. She provided him with five hundred oxen for his conquest and at a later date miraculously drew the bows of the army of Bikaner, allowing them to defeat their enemies from a safe distance (Kamphorst 2008, 248). In exchange for her beneficence, the heirs to Bikaner's throne remained loyal to the Goddess, and over time, they elaborately adorned her temple in Deshnok. Related myths speak of the strong connection between the Goddess and the ruling elite of the area, a relationship that is honored in the songs and poetry of the Charan and the Rajputs.

Today, the Karni temple in Deshnok has become an important gathering spot for many Charan branches. Her devotees often mention that after the 1947 Partition and the subsequent problems in reaching Hinglaj, Karni has become the most important site for the community. The same, however, is also often said about the temple of Temra Rai near Jaisalmer. The annual 42-kilometer-long circumambulation of the temple is especially an attraction for tens of thousands of people. Among the crowds are many Rajputs who link their community's existence, or survival, to the help of Karni Mata. In this way, such "foundation tales" (Kamphorst 2008, 248) and the Goddess's miracles are commemorated and firmly established as a part of the collective memory of many groups.

2.3.2.3 Hinglaj Through Charan Eyes

On the basis of the works on Charan traditions by Tambs-Lyche (1999, 2004) and Kamphorst (2008) cited above, one may assume that the Goddess cult of the western Indian subcontinent was already active between the seventh and ninth centuries, possibly incorporating rituals that might have already existed at the shrine of Hinglaj/Nani in Balochistan. Unfortunately, no definite proof is available. Further, the Goddess Hinglaj is understood by some as the first incarnation, the *ādiśakti*, and thus the center for many variations of Goddess worship in western India (Tambs-Lyche 2004, 64). The

mytho-historic narratives of the bards and the Rajput communities reveal a strong connection between the establishment of ruling dynasties in the area and the apotheosis of many Charan women. Such cultural memories may bear witness to a consistent theme of governance in western India. The deification of the Charani was often related to their social and material status and was closely linked to their relationships with local rulers. According to Tambs-Lyche, these various local incarnations became anchored to the shrine of Hinglaj and further interpreted in its light. With the establishment of these links to the place in Balochistan, a continuous history was created that is reiterated and perpetuated today in the stories and the poetry of the bards.

2.3.3 Changing Caste Through Ritual: Mekan Dada and the Kapris

Within the mytho-historic memory of the Kapri (also Kapadi)[35] community in Gujarat, the pilgrimage to Hinglaj plays a seminal role. The mythological journey undertaken by Rama and his entourage in the Treta Yuga is an especially important point of reference for the group's identity. While I will discuss Rama's journey in detail in Chapter 3, for now I will mention those points of the story that relate directly to the Kapris. In their narratives, the Kapris present themselves either as the descendants of Lalu Jasraj, Rama's *aguā* (Hin. guide) who helped the king of Ayodhya and his entourage on their way through the desert (Joshi 2010, 21) or as the descendants of members of Rama's army that accompanied the king.[36]

Unfortunately, aside from some short descriptions in a few publications, not much has been written specifically about the small Kapri community of Gujarat, and, thus, this chapter is mainly informed by oral histories gathered in India and Pakistan. The *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* only mentions that the Kapris are followers of the Goddess Ashapura and that they frequently visit the shrine of Hinglaj in Balochistan (Hastings and Selbie 2003, 716).

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35. The spelling "Kapri" (*kapʹṛī*) was provided by members of the community, so I will mainly use this transliteration.

36. These descriptions vary according to the people asked. Today, the community separates itself into four branches: the Ramsnehi, the Ashapuri, the Shravani, and the Makadbanth Kapri. This chapter is mainly informed by followers of Mekan Dada from the area of Kutch, who would be described as Makadbanth Kapri within this taxonomy. My informants—notwithstanding knowing this classification—always referred to themselves simply as Kapris. Therefore, I will also adhere to this description.

Boivin believes them to be an offshoot of the Kanphata community which became independent at a certain time (Boivin 2007, 35). Mohidden writes that the community claims its origins in the Treta Yuga, where Rama visited a place called "Hingadajki," a sacred site the author assumes to be located somewhere in today's Saudi Arabia. It is very likely that this is simply a misreading of "Hinglaj." The same article also describes "Kapadi" as a general term since "anybody professing Hindu religion can become a Kapadi" (Mohidden 2003, 603). The ability for any person to become a member of the community is attributable to the pilgrimage to Hinglaj by the Gujarati saint Mekan Dada.

Mekan Dada (1666–1729) was one of the community's last reformers, considered by my interviewees to be an incarnation of Lakshmana, Rama's younger brother. According to the Kapri tradition in Kutch, Mekan himself went to Hinglaj around the end of the seventeenth century. He spent the remainder of his life wandering the Rann of Kutch accompanied only by a donkey (named Laliyo) and a dog (named Motiyo) in search of people who had lost their way in the vast desert. The saint was famous for preaching against untouchability and promoting social equality. Mekan Dada's *samādhi* (Hin. state of enlightenment; but also "tomb of a saint") today is found in the village of Dhrang, also in Kutch, where he is buried together with his donkey and his dog.

For the Kapri community, anyone who emerges from Hinglaj's cave in Balochistan is automatically initiated into the group and can assume the title "Kapri." This is not, however, an exclusively local concept as revealed in publications from other regions. Depavat, a Charan author from Rajasthan, also lends support to this idea, writing that following the pilgrimage of the great Gujarati saint "Dādā Marvān" (Mekan Dada) to Hinglaj, everyone who comes out of the Goddess's womb (Hin. *garbha*) also attains the title "*kāpaḍiyā*" (Depavat 2010, 147). Kamphorst also refers to this tradition in her short overview of the Goddess Hinglaj when she writes: "In this way all travellers become religious brothers and assume the title Kapadiya" (Kamphorst 2008, 238). However, she does not explain further what this title means or where it came from.

This interesting possibility of altering one's community background through the pilgrimage to Hinglaj—often used to gain prestige and upward social mobility in today's Gujarat—will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4. Here, I will only present the basis for this unique relationship between the Kapri community, Mekan Dada, and Hinglaj. As the Hinglaj pilgrimage by Rama and his entourage are critical to this relationship, I will first give a brief description of this legend. The following two stories are paraphrases from interviews conducted with members of the Kapri community in 2010 and in 2011.

> By killing Ravana, who had kidnapped his wife, Sita, Rama became guilty of the sin of killing a Brahmin. The sage Vashishta advised Rama to go

> on the pilgrimage to Hinglaj, which was the only place where he could be purified of his horrible offense. His faithful brother Lakshmana, his wife Sita, and Hanuman, the monkey God, accompanied him. On the way to Hinglaj, Rama met Lalu Jasraj Kapri, who had already been informed about the god's arrival and who invited Rama and his entourage to eat. But Rama declined, explaining that he must first feed one hundred Brahmins before he could accept food from Jasraj. So Lalu raised his arms into the sky and asked the Goddess Sarasvati for Brahmins. She sent him 1,296 Brahmins, and Lalu said to Rama: "Now take a hundred of them and feed them so that you can fulfill your pledge. I will give you 1,100 Brahmins for your army. These Brahmins will not only fight for you, but will also give your army knowledge and wisdom so that your empire will be successful." These eleven hundred Brahmins later became known as the Ramsnehi Kapris, the lovers of Rama. The remaining ninety-six Brahmins performed a sacrifice for Rama and accepted Hinglaj as their clan Goddess. Rama was very pleased and told Lalu Jasraj, "I will free you from the fetters of the world!" before setting off for Hinglaj. After Rama successfully accomplished the pilgrimage, he gave his clothes to Lalu as a gift. Lakshmana also wanted to offer his clothes to the loyal guide, but Rama said: "Do not give them to him; you will need them again when you will be reborn into this world as Mekan Dada." So they buried all the things that Lakshmana had carried with him on the pilgrimage in the village Kombhri, in Nakatrana.

This story recounts the former life of saint Mekan Dada, who was once Rama's faithful brother, Lakshmana. The mythological explanation as to why anybody can become a member of this community is given in the account of Mekan Dada's Hinglaj pilgrimage. His life story, which builds on this prelude, is well known in the Kutch area, and I heard the following narrative told by various people who occasionally highlighted different points in the story. This is an excerpt that forms the core of several oral narratives:

> Mekan was born into a Bhati Rajput family. Ever since he could speak, Mekan told his parents that they should never dig a hole in the ground at one particular spot on their land. When Mekan was twelve years old, his father, Hardhol, started to send him alone to the fields to graze the cattle, and as a result Mekan frequently left his village for several weeks at a time. One such time when Mekan was away, his parents decided to build a new barn. They had forgotten their child's words and began digging where Mekan had advised them not to. There in the ground they found a particular kind of clothing, the same that pilgrims wear on their way to Hinglaj. When Mekan came home from grazing the cattle, he

saw the clothes that had been found on his family's estate and he silently took them with him and left his parents' home. He went directly to the temple of Ashapura and asked the pujārī there to give him his blessing so that he could set out on the difficult pilgrimage to Hinglaj.

When they learned of the boy's actions, Mekan's parents were opposed to his sudden decision and forbade him from undertaking such a dangerous pilgrimage through the desert. So Mekan sat down with them and told them: "In a former life I was Lakshmana, the younger brother of Rama, and I went with him, Sita, Hanuman, and a full army to the cave of Hinglaj. When I came back, Rama told me to bury my clothes here, where they would wait for me until the day I returned to this earth. I forbade you to dig there since I knew that when these clothes reappear on earth I would have to follow my dharma and become an ascetic. Due to this past life, I must now go and serve Mata Hinglaj." So Mekan put on the pilgrim's habit, said farewell to his parents, and set out on the pilgrimage to Hinglaj.

The Goddess was so pleased with Mekan that she went to meet him in the desert, far ahead of her shrine in Balochistan. She was disguised as a normal shepherd, wearing a Balochi dress and accompanied by a herd of goats she had created through her mantra power. Mekan approached her and said: "Mother, I am thirsty. I have been walking through the desert for days without water; give me some milk from your goats." The Mother said: "Take as much as you want!" So Mekan took a cup out of his bag and said: "If I can take as much as I want then fill this glass for me." But with his powers, Mekan had made the glass so tall that its rim reached high into the sky. The Mother did not notice, and so she thought she could fill the cup easily and began milking the goat's udder with just one finger. But the cup did not fill up. She then squeezed with two fingers, so that thousands of liters came out, but the glass still did not fill up. Finally, she squeezed with her whole hand so that a hundred thousand liters came out, but still she could not fill the glass. So, the Mother thought: "This boy is a powerful saint. No matter how much milk I give him, his cup does not become full." So Mekan said to her: "Mother, I am your son! Even when you take all the milk from all the goats in the world, you will not be able to fill my cup! Devi, stand up and show me your real form. I know that you are actually Hinglaj Mata!" So, the Goddess showed herself to him and said: "Mekan, your journey is over! Name your wish, I will give you anything!" But Mekan Dada said: "I don't want anything from you. I have great power already, what would I do with more?" The Mother was pleased and said: "Go back, your journey was successful!" But Mekan replied: "No, I will go to Hinglaj! I will do all the necessary things. I will go to Chandrakup, I will climb up to

> Anil Kund, I will do the pūjā at your temple, I will put siṃdūr [Hin. vermilion] on the place where Rama sat down, and I will see the moon and the sun carved into stone there! I will receive all the knowledge and wisdom from this place and only then will I go home. Go to your abode, Mother, and wait there for me!" So, the Goddess went back and Mekan arrived some time later. He performed all the necessary rituals that one must on the pilgrimage. The Mother was very pleased with him, giving him a triśūla and a hat with a ṭhum'rā[37] wrapped around it, saying: "You will be the guru for all the people who come to my place and worship me properly! You will give life to the Kapris, and everyone who comes to me should be your disciple! This is my blessing for you." After the Goddess's darśan, Mekan returned to Kutch, where he began roaming the desert to help those who were lost.

These two narratives together explain why the shrine of Hinglaj is central to the Kapri community. First, Lalu Jasraj, the founder of the Kapris, is said to have been Rama's guide through the desert. Today, the place where Rama gave his clothing to Lalu Jasraj is said to be in Liari in Balochistan. This story, however, is mainly told by the Kapri community, and I have only spoken with a few other people in Sindh who actually knew of this account. It seems rather likely that the shrine of Magho Pir, which is now located in the northern part of Karachi, was once associated with Lalu Jasraj (Burton 1851, 326). Second, Mekan Dada, a widely acknowledged Kapri reformer from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, is said to have gained his power to revitalize the community through Hinglaj's blessings. These narratives, moreover, present an explanation as to why people from any community can become members of the Kapri *jāti*. The Goddess was impressed with Mekan's firm determination and his eagerness to visit her shrine, although she had already blessed him. So Kapris today say that the Devi promised that anyone similarly eager to properly perform all the rituals at her shrine would also become a part of Mekan's clan. It is due in part to this story of the Gujarati saint Mekan Dada that so many low-caste Gujarati communities are drawn to make the journey to Hinglaj, even after the Partition. However, in my conversations with Dayaram Kapri, the head of a Kapri ashram in Kutch and one organizer of cross-border pilgrimages to Hinglaj, he repeatedly emphasized, that people who come back from Balochistan only become "half Kapris." They are, for example, not allowed to marry into the community. The pilgrimage, however, does bring a certain amount of prestige and even certain lasting changes for the *yātrīs*. According to this tradition, even as "half Kapris," they are not burned on the pyre after death as they normally would be,

37. A particular necklace worn by pilgrims who successfully complete the journey the Hinglaj. The transcription for *ṭhum'rā* is adapted from Briggs (1938, 104).

but instead are buried in a *samādhi* (Hin. tomb). This intriguing way of social upward mobility through pilgrimage will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

2.4 The Lohana Community

Any research on Hindu communities in Pakistan would be incomplete without a description of the influential Lohana caste. Within the framework of Hinglaj, the Lohana's importance is even more significant as the community from Las Bela, a district close to Hinglaj, has widely taken over the organization and the authority to interpret the traditions and practices *at* and *to* the shrine. Their traditions solidified through the establishment of the temple committee, the Hinglaj Sheva Mandali (HSM), and the construction of the Makran Coastal Highway (MCH), which incidentally connects Hinglaj with urban Pakistan. Both of these developments will be introduced after a general overview of the Lohana tradition.

Richard Burton already noted the perception of the Lohanas as representing the general picture of the Sindhi Hindu when he wrote: "a description of them [the Lohanas], therefore, will be a general portrait of the Sindh Hindoos" (Burton 1851, 314). McMurdo also confirmed this when he wrote: "The Lowannas or Lohannas compose the great body of Hindus in Sindh" (Mubarak 1985, 55). Over the past few centuries, the Lohana community absorbed many other groups and clans, now encompassing a significant portion of the upper classes of Pakistani Hindus. In terms of ritual practices or sectarian interests, however, the Lohanas are quite a heterogeneous community, sharing few universal characteristics aside from the name. Given that some branches of the Lohanas worship Hinglaj as their clan Goddess means that their history is of particular importance for the present study. The Las Bela Lohana community, which forms the majority of the Hinglaj temple committee, the Hinglaj Sheva Mandali, exerts special influence on the narratives and practices at the shrine today. This temple committee and the impact of the pilgrimage's institutionalization in 1986 will be introduced below.

Thakur writes that the general belief among Lohanas is that their community originated from the heirs of Rama's son, called Lava, from whom the name Lohana ultimately developed (Thakur 1997, 56). This is also the story I heard most frequently when talking to Lohanas in Sindh. Lachaier, however, also documents other mytho-historic narratives in relation to the community (Lachaier 2008, 83). Another story says that the Lohanas were formerly Rathor Rajputs who obtained the help of the God Varuna in the battle against the Raja of Kanauj. According to that story, Varuna built the Rathors an iron fort that saved them from the Raja's attack. Even though the fort disappeared twenty-one days after the attack, the Rathors were from then onward called Lohana,

which the community translates as "those of iron" (Thakur 1997, 56). Richard Burton names Lohanpur in Multan as their place of origin (Burton 1851, 314). Many Lohanas in Sindh follow the teachings of Nanak, somewhat obscuring their religious affiliation for the colonial officers. Hence, in the 1881 census, Lohanas from Shikarpur and Hyderabad were counted as Sikhs, while ten years later, in the 1891 census, they were classified as Hindus (Lari 1994, 211f.).

Over the centuries, the Lohana community absorbed many other castes from the western part of the subcontinent. Lachaier claims that in the nineteenth century, the Lohanas were the most important trading community in the areas of Sindh, Kutch, and Saurashtra (Lachaier 2008, 82). One reason for this was the established rule of the Kalhoras in Sindh in the eighteenth century, which brought new business opportunities for merchant professions (Cook 2010, 140). The Lohana caste body gradually absorbed these incoming communities. Thakur writes:

> The case of Lohana caste is very peculiar. Unless a person is a member of any of the non-Lohana castes, he must be assumed to be a Lohana, members of which caste form the general body of the Sind Hindus . . . [P]eople . . . who migrated from Rajputanta and the Punjab and professed Lohana occupations have acquired membership of the Lohana caste. (Thakur 1997, 68f.)

The Bhatia and the Khatris, for example, arrived in the eighteenth century from cities in the Punjab—like Multan—and were ultimately absorbed as Lohanas (Cook 2010, 135). Zahid-Khan attributes this merging of different groups to the small number of non-Muslim Sindhis who united in the face of the majority (quoted in Cook 2010, 134).

Sindh's location between trading routes connecting Afghanistan, Khorasan, Arabia, Persia, Turkey, and other places made the province appealing to a wide array of merchants from the entire continent. It is of interest that one of these trading routes led to Persia via the state of Las Bela and Makran (Cook 2010, 141). According to local narratives, this route passed close to the Hinglaj shrine, which supports Kamphorst's claim that most Goddess shrines linked to Hinglaj are found along trading routes of the western subcontinent (Kamphorst 2008, 253).

Around the eighteenth or nineteenth century, a separation occurred within these merchant groups of Sindh. A subset of Lohanas began working for local rulers and soon become known as "Amils," while those who retained their merchant profession were called "Bhaiband" (Lachaier 2008, 83). The Amils, initially 10 to 15 percent of the Lohanas (Lari 1994, 211), soon acquired a higher status than the general Lohana and Khatri communities and thus became an

independent group. Over the following decades, they continued to draw members from the general Lohana and Khatri communities (Lachaier 2008, 83f.).

The simultaneous migration to Sindh also generated homologies between the Khatri and the Lohana communities (Cook 2010, 143). Thakur writes that the Lohanas share many attributes with the Arora, the Khatri, and the Bhanushali communities, who all recruit the Saraswat Brahmins as priests (Thakur 1997, 61). As I have demonstrated above, the relationship with the Sarasvat Brahmins is also visible in the composition of the *Hiṃgulā Purāṇ*, which describes the genealogy of these communities and brings them all together into one mytho-historic narrative. Thus, there is a strong connection between the Khatri and the Lohana castes. Cook notes the importance of Sikhism to both of these groups as further evidence of the intermingling of the Khatris and Lohanas (Cook 2010, 144–145). Lari supports this finding, writing that the Bhatias, the Khatris, and the Lohanas were very close communities and even intermarried (Lari 1994, 211). Evidence of the strong ties between Khatris and Saraswat Brahmins is also found in Khatri mythology, in an episode involving Parashurama (see above). It is said that many Kshatriya women tried to save their lives from Parashurama by hiding within Brahmin families, and as a proof of their Brahmin identity, they had to prepare food for the Brahmin men, who since that time accept food prepared by Kshatriaya (Khatri) women (Cook 2010, 144). This relationship between the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas is one of the main *topoi* among the Khatris and many related communities. It is important to note that such mythologies are equally found among the Lohanas, which speaks to the strong link between the two communities.

The temple committee at Hinglaj, the HSM has since its inception consisted mainly of Lohanas from the district of Las Bela. In this way, the HSM has become an institutional platform in which Lohana traditions are spread and also negotiated. Many of these Lasi Lohana communities worship the Goddess Hinglaj as their clan Goddess. They associate with the shrine in Balochistan through certain rites of passage—such as the wearing of the *janeū* (Hin.), the brahmanical thread (Burton 1851, 315) that is bestowed on the young at the River Hingol. These rituals have gained increasing importance over the past years.

2.4.1 The Hinglaj Sheva Mandali

The Hinglaj Sheva Mandali (Urd. Hinglāj Śevā Manḍalī; in the following also HSM) was established in order to promote an annual pilgrimage to the shrine. It was created on January 5, 1986, in Bela (Las Bela district), Balochistan, and

continues to be the main organization serving the temple and its pilgrims (Jethamalani 1994, 9). From the beginning, the HSM aimed to promote Hinglaj as an important place of worship for the *whole* Hindu *barādarī* (Urd. community, clan) in Pakistan, as early advertisements for the *yātrā* demonstrate.[38] In its early days, the HSM organized tour packages that included transportation, boarding, and lodging. Apparently, as little as thirty years ago, only a handful of people actually knew the exact location of the shrine.[39] Jagdish Rathi, an independent writer and author of many books on Goddess cults and Hindu traditions in Pakistan, describes the situation:

> In those days, knowledge of the area was scarce among the common people and not many knew where to go. Some might have heard about Hinglaj, but only a few had actually gone.[40]

The unknown location of Hinglaj posed a problem for which many devotees depended on local help, a niche that HSM members—mainly Lohanas originating from the region around the shrine—were able to fill. In the second half of the 1980s, the HSM started organizing tours and charged pilgrims 500 rupees for transportation, boarding, and lodging per trip. Later, from the 1990s forward, the price was raised to 1,025 rupees for the whole trip. But already in the mid-1990s, when the exact location of the shrine was apparently more widely known, many pilgrims stopped depending on the HSM's support, instead organizing their own trips. However, those who traveled in their own vehicles still had to pay 525 rupees to the Mandali for their stay in Hinglaj.[41] After the first part of the Makran Coastal Highway (N 10) was completed in 2001, the area around the River Hingol became connected to the National Highway 25, a heavily traveled road that links Karachi with Quetta. From that time onward, various private companies increasingly assumed the transportation to the valley. This caused the HSM to completely cease their business of arranging domestic transportation in 2009 and instead charge

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38. "*mulk bhar kī hindū barādarī xvātīn o mardon ko hinglāj mātā kī yātrā kī daʿvat detī hai*" (Urd.). From a 1987 announcement.

39. The elusiveness of the location was also confirmed by the members of the 4x4 Off-Road Club of Karachi, whom I met in 2010. The group had been going to the Hingol Valley repeatedly and only found the shrine after a few years of searching.

40. From a conversation in February 2012.

41. This is also documented on the announcement sheets of that time. However, during the 1990s, this fee varied from year to year.

250 rupees per person for entry to the shrine during the annual festival in April (Hin. *phālgun/caitra melā*). They eventually quit charging this fee in 2013.

The establishment of an annual gathering at Hinglaj was the idea of one person, Vasrup Chand Tulsi, who helped found the HSM for the express purpose of publicizing and organizing the pilgrimage (Jethamalani 1994, 8–9). The annual gathering was the *raison d´être* for the Mandali's establishment, but the organization soon also started to engage in the development of infrastructure in the area for supporting the yearly meeting. Mainly through the HSM's work, the annual festival has become well known and many Hindus I met all over the country had gone at least once. Today the festival plays a significant role within a broader Pakistani-Hindu landscape and only shares a few characteristics with the way the *yātrā* had been performed just a few years before. Various developments over the past few decades have turned the *melā* into one of the largest gatherings for Hindu communities in Pakistan—for most of my interviewees, it was even considered the biggest. It now annually attracts devotees from all over the country and even from abroad.

To this day, in spite of having ceased to organize transportation from within Pakistan, the HSM continues to coordinate transportation for visitors coming from abroad. The Mandali caters in particular to devotees from India who often wish to book a fully organized trip due to visa and security concerns. Aside from the challenges of procuring a visa, the prevailing picture of Pakistan as an extremely dangerous country, often perpetuated in the Indian (and Western) media, also discourages many pilgrims from going on their own.[42] The ease of journeys organized with the help of the Mandali is frequently described in newer Hindi travelogues, helping to increase the HSM's profile and contributing to the influx of visitors (Barhath 2006; Ratnu 2007). The role as a link between the Pakistani-Hindu world and a more international clientele adds to the Mandali's aura and its authority among Hindus in Pakistan.

Over the years, the HSM has also become increasingly responsible for the distribution of large amounts of money received by the temple as donations or (until 2013) as fees. A significant amount is also allocated by the provincial administration, which subsidizes the construction of pilgrimage shelters and roads in the valley. In 2012, the HSM supervised the construction of a bridge over the Hingol River with a total cost of 11 *crore* Pakistani rupees (about

42. During my research in India, I encountered many elaborate rumors of Indian pilgrims either being killed or kidnapped on their way to Hinglaj. All of these stories turned out to be false. It is because of such rumors that many pilgrims are reluctant to go on the pilgrimage to Balochistan on their own.

€920,000), funded by the Balochistan government. This capacity for overseeing the allocation of funds also adds to the HSM's local influence in Las Bela since they not only create jobs in the area—albeit with the help of the provincial government—but also possess significant contacts in the business communities of Las Bela and Karachi.

Together with the HSM's publicity work in relation to the annual *phālgun/caitra* gathering, various authors writing in Hindi, Urdu, and Sindhi also began promoting the shrine in Balochistan and often refer to the HSM in their publications.[43] It is difficult to state what might have been the primary catalyst, but it is evident that since the middle of the 1980s, one finds a network of increasing infrastructure, publications, and ritual journeys that have enabled a fast-paced development of the whole Hinglaj phenomenon. This growth is also evident in the lengthening list of publications about the temple, which correspond to the completion of the first part of the Makran Coastal Highway (MCH) up to the River Hingol.[44] However, *in medias res* of all of these events, one finds time and again traces of the HSM's efforts. The organization certainly has done most of the work in propagating the image of the place as an important *tīrtha yātrā* for all Hindus.[45] All of these elements together helped to create a certain visibility of the shrine among the many Hindu communities in Pakistan and also abroad. This culminated in the April 2010 gathering during which, according to HSM's ticket sale records, over forty thousand people visited the shrine.

Thus, the influence of the HSM and, in a broader sense, of the Lasi Lohana community, on the politics of information, mobility, and ritual practices at the shrine cannot be underestimated. Cresswell writes that one sign of the advent of high modernity is the increasing organization of mobility through "timetables and mechanizations" (Cresswell 2006, 10). For the pilgrimage network of Hinglaj, the work of the HSM along with the construction of the Makran Coastal Highway are the main factors pushing ritual journeys to Hinglaj into modernity. Today, buses run on a schedule connecting Karachi and Gwadar—and therefore—Karachi and the Hinglaj Valley. Also, the festivals

43. See Jethamalani (1994); Rathi (2010); Lakhavat (2011).

44. In the 1980s and 1990s, only two books about Hinglaj were published. In the decade after 2001, five works about the Goddess were published, three of them in 2001, the same year as the completion of the first part of the MCH.

45. Their efforts to make the place appealing to all Hindu communities of Pakistan is found in the repeated invocation of a Pakistani-Hindu community (Urd. "*mulk bhar kī hindū barādarī*") on the announcement leaflets. This is one of the few instances where such a community is evoked in the texts I studied.

are institutionalized and fixed to a certain time and date. While traditional paths were marked by insecurity, even to the extent that return from the journey was not a guarantee, now there is a certain sense of regulated mobility not only at the Hinglaj shrine but also on the journey there. This is visible in the solidification of different pilgrimage paths into one prevailing route following a certain set of chosen stops on the way.

2.4.2 Makran Coastal Highway

The completion of the 650-kilometer MCH from Liari to Gabd at the Iranian border in 2003 (Hasan 2009, 161) represented not just a major infrastructural development for the coastal area but also a significant contribution to the Hinglaj shrine's increasing visibility for Hindu communities in Pakistan and internationally.[46] The project aimed to develop industries along the coastal areas and to link Pakistan's commercial metropolis, Karachi, with the ports of Omara, Pasni, and Gwadar in the far west of the country. With the help of the Chinese, the Pakistani government, under General Musharraf (in office 2001–2008), invested in the deep-water port at Gwadar, intending to develop it into a major commercial center at the entrance to the Persian Gulf (Lieven 2011, 343). Before the turn of the millennium, the journey from Karachi to Gwadar took two to three days and required cross-country vehicles, causing many to prefer the longer route via Quetta. After the construction of the road, the Hinglaj Valley, at the mouth of the Hingol River, became connected to urban Pakistan, making a trip from Karachi possible in just three and a half hours.

The MCH was built in consecutive stages, and the first part, linking the Hingol valley with Karachi, was completed and in use by 2001. This new accessibility dramatically changed the representations and practices at the shrine, and the newfound ease with which Hinglaj was quickly reachable stirred up discussions of identity and religious merit at the place. Because of the new road, the inevitably demanding and arduous journey by foot, ship, or, more recently by off-road vehicle, suddenly became optional for visitors and a matter of choice. Today, pilgrims can decide if they want to undertake a grueling journey by foot to Hinglaj or if they prefer to simply take the easy road and board one of the many buses that travel on the MCH. But, as will be discussed in more detail later, the road has not only influenced the number of visitors at the shrine but has

46. Most of this information, if not noted otherwise, is from a lengthy conversation in Karachi in 2011 with Colonel Akhtar, who supervised the construction of the highway in the beginning of the millennium.

also triggered a renewed tendency toward the walking tradition. Unburdened by the scarcity of water and the lingering possibility of getting lost in the desert, many pilgrims have started to peregrinate along the highway itself to reach the shrine of Hinglaj.

Such developments are certainly not unique to this case study but have been documented in other places. For example, Jacobsen identifies such changes at the time of the railway construction in India, which had a significant impact on the pilgrimage landscape. He writes:

> As the means of transportation has improved, starting with the development of the Indian railway, pilgrimage has become easy and this has influenced the expectation of the rewards of pilgrimage. In many pilgrimages, but still with a number of exceptions, there is no longer any similarity between the wandering of ascetics and the journey of pilgrims. (Jacobsen 2013, 21)

However, while the means of travel at these other pilgrimage locations have steadily evolved over many decades, events around Hinglaj are fairly recent, and the incorporation of the new practices of mobility at the shrine have not yet become completely final. The sudden connection of Hinglaj—a site that formerly earned most of its "symbolic capital" (Bourdieu 1998) from its distant desert location and resulting restricted mobility—with urban centers and national highways currently occupies the time and energy of many who aim to coherently incorporate this into the religious imaginary and the rituals at the shrine.

2.5 Hinglaj and Sindh

2.5.1 Hinglaj and "Syncretic Sindhi Nationalism"

So far, Hinglaj has been introduced through its role in the myth of the Goddess Sati, its position as one of the fifty-one *śākta pīṭhas*, and its mention in various Sanskrit sources. The second part of the preceding subchapter presented the importance of Hinglaj as a caste or clan Goddess (Hin. *kul'devī*) for certain communities and her role within their mytho-historic memories. Next, I will describe Hinglaj's role as it appears in the writing of a few Sindhi authors. Within this discourse, Hinglaj emerges in a completely different role—as the hallmark of a phenomenon I will term "syncretic Sindhi nationalism." Such texts portray Hinglaj as an intrinsically Sindhi religious place, appropriating and rearticulating it as an instrument of Sindhi nationalism that aspires to transgress

religious boundaries. In the spirit of what has been said in Chapter 1, I understand nationalism as a kind of group formation in which the so-called unity of a large and heterogeneous (or even "imagined") group is evoked through the articulation of certain commonly shared nodal points, gaining their influential role in opposition to some excluded other. As will be demonstrated, nodal points of Sindhi nationalism emphasize religious harmony and thus subsume the difference between Hindus and Muslims under the superior signifier of ethnic identity.

The partition of the subcontinent brought major changes to the province of Sindh. The departure of the Hindu elite and the influx of Muslim refugees ("Muhajirs") from India dramatically altered the local demography, and the Sindhi community became increasingly defined by its perception of being ostracized and subjugated by Muhajir power. Today in Pakistan, one commonly hears Sindhi patriots and nationalists lamenting the degenerated state of the province, a complaint that is often directly linked to the establishment of Pakistan. Within such nationalist discourses—found on both sides of the border, in India and in Pakistan—the Sindh province is presented as a distinct entity lacking any cultural links to other provinces or the state of Pakistan generally. K. R. Malkani (1921–2003) captures this resentment in his publication, *The Sindh Story* (1997):

> As for the state of Pakistan, Sindh rejects it wholly. Sindh has always been there, Pakistan is a passing show. Sindh is a fact, Pakistan is a fiction. Sindhis are a nation, but Muslims are not a nation. Sindhi language is 2,000 years old, Urdu is only 250 years old. Sindhi has 52 letters, Urdu has only 26. [*sic*] (Malkani ~~1984~~, 134)

And at another point, the author describes Sindh's relationship to Pakistan:

> A Sufi Sindh and an Islamic Pakistan cannot coexist—even as you can't put two swords in one scabbard. If Pakistan continues, Sindh will die. If, therefore, Sindh is to live, Pakistan must die . . . . There are many cowards and collaborators in Sindh. Some of them have married Urdu-*wallas*—and they even speak Urdu at home. (Malkani ~~1984~~, 136)

Malkani's book teems with such rants against Pakistan and everything broadly associated with it. These quotes are the opinion of a Sindhi in exile who, as a Hindu, left Hyderabad after Partition and settled in New Delhi. Malkani's text, however, brings the buttresses of Sindhi nationalist discourse clearly to the

fore. Here, Sindh is described as solid, ancient, and refined, while Pakistan and its "Urdu-*wallas*" are portrayed as temporary, shallow, and uncultured.

But Sindhi nationalist discourses express resentment not just toward Pakistan, cited as the cause of the province's current state of decline. They also aim at British rule, which they view as having victimized Sindh. Here, another kind of intruder, the British colonizer and not the Muhajir, holds responsibility for the slow destruction of Sindh's glorious past. Hussain Soomro, a prolific Pakistani author, describes the time before the British invasion in this way:

> Sindh was so prosperous that it was commonly described that there is abundance of milk and honey in Sindh . . . . Sindhis were happy, prosperous people with no desire of conquering other people. [*sic*] (Soomro 2009, 3)

Soomro also renders the history of Sindh as a story of decline in which the province lost some "golden past," which it had enjoyed before the invasion of outsiders. These narratives cast Pakistan and the British as the culprits in the case of lost harmony and affluence in Sindh, a land once home to a culture of peace, tolerance, and prosperity.

Oscar Verkaaik has described this approach to Sindhi history in his work, particularly in his article "The Sufi Saints of Sindhi Nationalism" (Verkaaik 2010). He finds Sindhi nationalist narratives to be organized around the cornerstones of the "Sindhi language, the poetry of [national poet] Shah Abdul Latif, the Indus, the peasant or *hari*, and above all, Sufism and mysticism" (Verkaaik 2010, 197). Another important element, particularly crucial in the case of Hinglaj, is the relationship of modern-day Sindh to the Mohenjo-Daro civilization. Verkaaik describes Sindhi nationalism as a relatively new phenomenon that began with the struggle for independence from the Bombay Presidency in the 1920s and 1930s (Verkaaik 2010, 197). Important for the further development of this discourse was, according to Verkaaik, the 1947 publication, *Save Sind, Save the Continent*, by Ibrahmin Joyo. In this work, Joyo deals with the difference between nationalism and communalism, which—according to him—have completely dissimilar roots. While for Joyo, communalism is, in short, a "ridiculous idea with absurd consequences," true nationalism "is not based on religion, but history, culture, and geography" (Verkaaik 2010, 202). Here, we clearly see how Sindhi nationalism organizes itself around certain nodal points—in this case, Mohenjo-Daro, Shah Abdul Latif, Sufism, and so forth—which give meaning to discursive formations by articulating a set of heterogeneous elements into a coherent narrative through

their opposition to some excluded other—above the order brought by the British or by the state of Pakistan.

Another important writer in this regard—if not the most influential—was G. M. Syed (1904–1995). Syed, a reformer, member of the Theosophical Society, and politician who spent many years in prison for his separatist views on Sindh and Pakistan, directly linked the province of Sindh with a tradition of Sufism (Urd. *taṣavvuf*). In his work *Religion and Reality*, he ascribes a certain evolution to religion and demands a more rational approach to religious practice (Syed 1986). Syed interprets the different world religions as particular stages of an evolving human spirit. He asserts that starting from primitive Hinduism and Buddhism, mankind developed toward Christianity and Islam and, in his view, eventually gained a scientific approach to existence, which ultimately excels in Sufism (Verkaaik 2004, 33). Syed then finds Sufism, as the universal goal of the human race, in its purest form in the province of Sindh. For him, this is proven by the various shrines of Sufi saints that are, to this day, visited by Hindus and Muslims alike. Thus, the Sindhi people—be they Hindu or Muslim—have access to a universal ideology that is valid for all of mankind (Verkaaik 2010, 208). Syed's approach, however, is paradoxical in its basic assumption: on the one hand, it is universal to all, transcending petty religious boundaries such as that lying between Hinduism and Islam, but on the other hand, it is geographically deeply rooted in Sindh and its inhabitants. Verkaaik puts this very precisely, when he writes: "In short, both Sindhi Hindus and Muslims were influenced by mysticism and religious tolerance. This was the Sindhi essence that both Hindus and Muslims shared" (Verkaaik 2010, 210). Taking my lead from Verkaaik, I term this particular aspect of Sindhi nationalism—that which emphasizes the transgression of religious borders but firmly plants itself within an assumed Sindhi nation—"syncretic nationalism." I am conscious of the fact that the term "syncretism" does not hold to current theories of culture and has been widely criticized due to its implicit hierarchization of traditions (Ringgren 1969). I nonetheless deem its conceptual logic precise in the context of Sindhi nationalism. Such syncretism is seen, for example, in the work of G. M. Syed, where he accepts Islam and Hinduism as two separate entities—a step necessary to speak of the term. This, however, is only the first stage for him to deny their difference again—this time under the notion of Sufism and the Sindhi nation. While syncretism has become obsolete due to its inherent assumption of a clear-cut border between religions traditions, Sindhi nationalism, on the contrary, needs such hard and fast separations. It must emphasize the basic differences between Islam and Hinduism in order to show its outstanding

ability to unite them. Within this discourse, the shrine of Hinglaj emerges as a materialized form of Sindhi religious unity.

At this point, a few remarks are necessary to explain the background of Muslim interest in Hinglaj. There is not much to be found in the literature, and only a few colonial reports mention related mythologies. Colonel Wilford writes that the local Muslim community living around the temple believed that Eve fell from heaven, landed in one of the ponds inside the valley, and later settled there and became known as Bibi Nani or as Hinglaj (Wilford 1851, 259; Abro 1991, 66). Hart mentions that Muslims in the area claimed that Hazrat Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammad, split a rock in two with his sword as he was on his way into the valley (Hart 1839, 94). And one of Aurel Stein's informants claimed that Hinglaj, or Bibi Nani, is considered to be the wife of Ali (Stein 1943, 202). Today, such myths have virtually vanished from Hinglaj, and even though many recent Hindu texts note this element of Muslim worship at the shrine, no particular details are given.

Most of the local Muslim communities in the area around Hinglaj and along the Makran coast originate from the Zikri Muslim community, and it is very likely that the reports found in these colonial accounts stem from members of this large group. The Zikri community is a small sect within Islam based upon the teachings of Mohammad Jaunpuri from the fifteenth century. Zikris mainly subscribe to the tenets of Sunni Islam, but practice the *ẕikr* (Urd.), the recitation of the name of Allah instead of the common prayer. Not many details on the community have been documented, and the most extensive research to date can be found in Baloch (2010). In my experience, Zikris in Las Bela and Makran take a different approach to their religious practice than Zikris in Karachi, who adhere to more common interpretations of Islam. Zikri Muslim pilgrims still visit the shrine today, but no one I spoke with mentioned Eve or the notion of Hinglaj being the grandmother or wife of Ali. Instead, Zikris today see Hinglaj as a Balochi "*pīr*" (Urd. saint) who is a part of their distinct culture and who has the power to fulfill wishes. The Zikris, in fact, were in charge of the shrine for many years, until in 1986 when the organization was taken over by the HSM, the current Hindu temple committee. Before the 1980s, Dost Mohammad was the main caretaker of Hinglaj, and his descendants still work today for the HSM as cooks, guides, and drivers. The lack of any current mytho-historic narratives at the shrine told from a Zikri perspective relates to an increasing "Hinduization" inside the valley through which any kind of (Zikri) Muslim symbol is increasingly marginalized. That issue will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

A syncretic Sindhi nationalist discourse utilizes the shrine in Balochistan to emphasize two points. First, writers stress the claim that the shrine is a part of the Mohenjo-Daro civilization and thus a five-thousand-year-old—but intrinsically Sindhi—cultural heritage site that transgresses common religious boundaries. And second, they argue that even though Hinglaj is older than both these religions, Muslims and Hindus have both been worshipping at the shrine for many centuries. Proof of this last point is provided by indicating the journey of the national poet Shah Abdul Latif "Bhittai" (1690–1751), who traveled to Hinglaj together with a group of Hindu ascetics, as will be discussed below. These writers emphasize the common notion among Sindhis today that in the history of Sindh, there is no religious tension between the two communities—Muslims and Hindus. This notion of the harmonious coexistence of the religions, however, is merely a nationalist utopian ideal, as Aggarwal (2013) has shown.

Attempts to establish a link between Mohenjo-Daro and the shrine in Balochistan frequently utilize the name Bibi Nani as the Goddess is also called locally among (Zikri) Muslim and Hindu communities in Las Bela and the Makran. This name raises the possibility of a link between Hinglaj/Bibi Nani and the Chaldean Goddess Nana and thus a possible connection to an ancient tradition of worship that chronologically exceeds communitarian boundaries. However, before analyzing the connection between Hinglaj and Mohenjo-Daro through the work of two prolific Sindhi writers, I will provide a short history of this association of Hinglaj/Bibi Nani with Nana and other Eurasian Goddesses.

2.5.2 The History of Bibi Nani

Charles Masson (1800–1853) wrote an early description of the shrine in 1842 that influenced many later accounts of the Goddess. Masson—whose actual name was James Lewis—worked as a soldier for the East India Company. At one point, he writes about the Hinglaj shrine in his account *Narrative of Various Journeys in Balochistan, Afghanistan, and the Punjab, 1826 to 1838*:

> The sacred locality is called Hinglátz. It is understood to be consecrated to Parbatí, the goddess of nature, the universal mother, &c., or Diana, the moon, &c. By Máhommedans, by whom it is alike revered, the shrine is considered as one of Bíbí Nánī, the lady Nání, or the motherly lady. It is possible they have preserved the ancient name NANAIA, that of the goddess of the old Persians, and the Bactrians, and now so well known to us by coins. There is a small mat or temple at Hinglátz, but

> the chief attractions appear to be natural objects, as a kand, or reservoir of water; a well, of unfathomable depth, above the mat; and the semblance the mural disposition of the rock presents, in a certain spot, to that of a fortress. There are also said to be figures of the sun and the moon hewn on the rock, in an accessible site. (Masson 1977, 390f.)

This is the first explicit textual mention of the name "Bibi Nani" available to me and is one of the primary references to a Muslim influence at the shrine within colonial literature. Here, Masson assumes that the name "Nani" is linked to other Goddesses west of the Makran, though he provides no further evidence for this belief.

Another influential writer whose work is relevant to this overview is Thomas Holdich (1843–1929), an English geographer who worked for the Survey of India and traveled widely in the border areas of the Empire. His books *India* (1904) and *The Gates of India* (1910) are compilations of notes from his extensive journeys during those years (Holdich 1910, vi). In the introduction to *The Gates of India*, Holdich praises the bravery of earlier explorers like Henry Pottinger, Charles Masson, and Alexander Cunningham, whose work he wishes to revive in his writing (Holdich 1910, vii). Holdich stresses the possible association of Hinglaj/Nani with other Goddess traditions in Asia and describes her influence as extending "from the Euphrates to the Ganges" (Holdich 1904, 45). He also mentions the shrine's importance for both Muslims and Hindus:

> Here Hindoo and Muhammadan pilgrims alike resort, each claiming the divine protection of the presiding goddess or of the departed saint, according to the tenets of their faith; and neither recognising that the object of their veneration is probably the same goddess who was known to the Chaldeans under the same old-world name (Nana) a thousand years before the time of Abraham. (Holdich 1904, 45)

With this statement, Holdich proclaims the shrine's antiquity to surpass both Islam and Hinduism, placing the Goddess in an independent position, untouched by any present religious current. The work of many later writers bolstered this claim.

Notwithstanding the fact that others before Charles Masson mentioned the shrine's attraction for both religious communities (Hart 1839, 87), Masson apparently was the first who hypothesized a connection to an ancient Near Eastern Goddess, an idea that from that time onward became integral to the description of Hinglaj. In particular, the shrine's association with the worship

of Persian, Bactrian, or Chaldean Goddesses is an aspect of the site for which colonial sources are preferentially mentioned.[47] However, it is primarily the writings of Masson and Holdich that exert significant influence on contemporary literature concerning the shrine in Balochistan and that also have been ultimately integrated into contemporary Sindhi publications about the Goddess Hinglaj.

2.5.3 Hinglaj in Sindhi Writing

Interesting for the study of Hinglaj and her role within nationalist Sindhi writing is Ishtiaq Ansari's description of a (global) history of Mother worship. Ansari's 2001 book *Dhartī Mātā* is based on extensive research on Hinglaj and, more generally, on Goddess veneration in South Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. Concerning indications of Hinglaj/Nanī's incorporation into Chaldean, Persian, and even Egyptian contexts, Ansari quotes, among others, the work of Ali Ahmad Brohi, a Sindhi scholar, and Thomas Holdich, mentioned above (Ansari 2001, 19). For further emphasis, Ansari cites from the Las Bela Gazetteer (McConaghey et al. 1907), which also mentions the relationship. The Gazetteer describes the Goddess's importance for both Hindus and Muslims and also introduces the possibility that the deity might be related to a Chaldean tradition, thus dating her to a thousand years before Abraham (Ansari 2001, 36). Scrutinizing the quote within Ansari's argument, one finds that the Gazetteer's account does not build upon new, independent research in this area but is, in fact, also directly derived from Thomas Holdich's book *India* (1904).[48]

In Ansari's view, the development of religion in Sindh is directly connected to the evolution of human existence. Inspired by the work of G. M. Syed, introduced above, Ansari directly associates the ancient civilization of Mohenjo-Daro with today's Sindhi people (Ansari 2001). To broaden his argument of Sindh's "golden past," Ansari claims that the composition of the Veda occurred on the shores of the Indus. Furthermore, he states that Shiva and the Mother Goddess were already known and honored in the ancient civilization of Sindh (Ansari 2001, 111–112). The veneration of the Goddess was, he emphasizes, already in place in Sindh before the Aryans conquered the area

47. In 1913, William Crooke quoted Masson's idea in his article "Hinglāj," written for the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (ERE), a piece frequently quoted in later literature. Besides Masson's allusion, Crooke also describes the circumambulation at the shrine and compares it to other rituals in Europe and Egypt (Hastings and Selbie 2003, 715).

48. Compare here Holdich (1904, 45) with McConaghey et al. (1907, 36).

"five thousand years ago" (Ansari 2001, 154). Hence, the cult of the Mother Goddess predates the coming of the Aryans (Ansari 2001, 161). More important, this pre-Aryan Mother worship is, according to Ansari, connected to other Goddess veneration in, for example, ancient Egypt, Greece, and Austria (Ansari 2001, 144–162).

On the foundation of this historic overview, Ansari links the history of the Mohenjo-Daro civilization with the place and the pilgrimage of Hinglaj. The fact that the Mother Goddess was also worshipped by other ancient civilizations—besides Egypt, Greece, and Europe also in places like Brazil and Turkey—to him is indicative of an "evolution of human consciousness" whose roots are found in "matriarchy" (Ansari 2001, 15).[49] In this view of history, Hinglaj was worshipped in Sindh before the coming of the Aryans and was only later adopted by the (Aryan) Kshatriyas and hence by Hinduism (Ansari 2001, 322). Hinglaj falls into the same time period as the ancient Mohenjo-Daro or might be "even older than that" (Ansari 2001, 335). Through this historiographical tour de force, Ansari connects the shrine in Balochistan to Sindh's cultural heritage and also to other ancient world civilizations. Thus, in his estimation, the Goddess Hinglaj predates Hindu and Muslim invasions into Sindh and thus renders her immune to religious and sectarian skirmishes.

Badar Abro's argument follows a similar structure. In his 1991 book, *Hinglāj ai Lāhūt*, Abro quotes from the work of Ali Ahmad Brohi, mentioned above, and from the work of another scholar, M. N. Billimoria. Although Billimoria's contribution seems, at first, to build upon new research, he also quotes Holdich (1910) when illustrating the Goddess's history and her connection to older traditions (Billimoria 1944, 94–95). Billimoria also refers extensively (often without citation of direct quotations) to Crooke's 1913 article in the ERE (Billmoria 1944, 93).[50] Crooke quotes Masson's argument to provide support for his own thesis, thus creating a direct connection between Abro's synopsis and Masson's writing from 1844. Billimoria also cites more than five pages directly from Captain Hart's 1839 travelogue. His contribution to the

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49. "*Asān ke dhartī te insān jo ḍāke ba ḍāke śaᶜūrjaṇ jo tasalsal ai rāḅṭo naẓar ache tho. Ītrī qadr jo hinan jo pīro khaṇje tho tah sabhnī jūn pāṛūn pātāl tā'īn vañi hik jaǧh te milan thyūn, yaᶜnī sabhnī jo ḅij hik mādar parastī āhe*" (Sin.).

50. The following paragraph corresponds almost verbatim with Crooke's article: "The title of Bibi Nani may be identified with Nanea, the mother-goddess worshipped in Syria, Persia and Armenia, and other parts of Asia under the names Anaiti, Anaea, Aneitis or Tanais, the primeval Babylonian Goddess Nana, the lady of the temple E-anna of her city Uruk." This is also true of the paragraph that follows it. Consequently, I think it highly likely that this part was taken directly from the ERE (compare ERE 1913, 715 with Billimoria 1944, 93).

study of the Goddess Hinglaj is therefore, in fact, an amalgamation of older sources rather than a new approach to the question of Hinglaj's origin. On the basis of these arguments, mostly taken from the work of Billimoria and hence from colonial sources, Abro places the Goddess in a distant sphere where she is "related to the human past" (Sin. *insān jo māẓī*)—that is, detached from any specific religion—and hence removed from any kind of communal conflict (Abro 1991, 42). Abro also connects Hinglaj to the Mother Goddess from Mohenjo-Daro, adding that she is not distinct from "*Nānyā, Anāhītā, Kālī, Durgā [or] Pārbatī*" (Abro 1991, 51). Since, Hinglaj is thereby associated with almost every Goddess west and east of Balochistan; she is all-embracing, transcending, and surpassing communal differences. In addition, her existence in Mohenjo-Daro is scientifically evident to the author from archaeological discoveries (Abro 1991, 50–51).

Abro also presents common notions on Sindh's "golden past." At one point, he writes that Sindhis once lived in the valleys between Rohri and east Balochistan, an area he defines as the "real Sindh" (Sin. *aṣal sindh*) that was once "prosperous" (Abro 1991, 22; Sin. *sukhī satābī*). According to Abro, the whole Sindhi civilization originated in these mountains. The valley of Hinglaj is also located in this area and served the ancient Sindhis as a place of contemplation. This is why—according to Abro—Hinglaj can also be called a "thought evolution site" (Abro 1991, 25; Sin. *avāilī vīcār vastyūn*). Since Sindh remained under the influence of Sufi mysticism (Sin. *taṣavvuf*), the area is "fortunately in terms of faith, *secular* [in English]"[51] (Abro 1991, 23; italics added). This means that religious places in the region are not bound to particular communities or religious affiliations, but are a part of the collective heritage of a "real Sindh." For this reason, Hinglaj holds an importance for Sindhis aside from its mere mention in the work of the national poet Shah Abdul Latif (Abro 1991, 21). With these assertions, Abro envelops the shrine within a broader ancient tradition of Goddess veneration that exceeds the borders of present religion while remaining firmly integrated in what he claims to be the Sindhi nation.

2.5.4 Shah Abdul Latif and Hinglaj

Aside from historic references to the civilization of Mohenjo-Daro, the Sindhi national poet Shah Abdul Latif "Bhittai" (1690–1751) also plays a crucial role in connecting Hinglaj with Sindhi cultural heritage. Described by Verkaaik as one of the key elements of Sindhi nationalist discourse (Verkaaik 2010,

51. "*Sindh xūśqismatīʼa sān jīʼun tah ᶜqīdan jī mᶜāmulī men sekyūlar rahe āhe.*"

197),[52] Bhittai's seminal position for Sindhi culture is concisely summarized by Abdul Qadir Mangi in his introduction to the book, *Legacy of Shah Latif*:

> Our ancient civilization Mohen-jo-Daro was, indeed, great. So is our saint-poet Shah Abdul Lateef Bhitai in his art and thought. He is our identity even in this modern age. Every Sindhi, of whatever faith he may be, believes in the greatness of Bhitai. From a Kohli Bheel to a Syed, every one considers Bhitai his spiritual guide. Probably no poet of any other language in the world has attained so much popularity and fame in masses. (Kanasro 2007, 11)

Shah Latif is here described as the embodiment of Sindhi identity that "even" remains in modern times. The poet is exalted as being the idol of every Sindhi, transgressing every distinction of religion, class or caste. As the poet visited Hinglaj in the eighteenth century, this important role assigned to Bhittai also shifts Hinglaj into the limelight.[53]

It is said that Latif went to Hinglaj accompanying a group of "*kāpṛī*"[54] on their way to the shrine in Balochistan (Agha 2004, 446). Moreover, following the visit to the shrine, the poet continued to wander with the *kāpṛīs* for three more years, visiting other places like Dwarka (Dwarka district, Gujarat), Lakhpat (Kutch), Lahoot (Khuzdar), and Jaisalmer (Rajasthan) (Agha 2004, 427). Latif's experiences are documented in one part of his *magnum opus*, the *Risalo*, in a section called *Sur Rāmkalī* (Agha 2004, 427). This section has been interpreted in various—often diametrically opposed—ways, thereby validating the worldviews of orthodox (Sindhi) Muslims and Sindhi nationalists alike. While Sindhi nationalists look upon Latif as the ideal Sindhi—the perfect example for the tolerant and "syncretic" history of Sindh—other, more orthodox writers aim to explain away Latif's journey as "youthful

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52. According to another publication by Verkaaik, it was in fact G. M. Syed who held primary responsibility for generating Bhittai's role as the most important poet of Sindh (Verkaaik 2004, 33).

53. Compare here the story of the pilgrim Putu in Chapter 4. Putu had walked to Hinglaj from his home village in interior Sindh when I met him at the shrine. He and other men in the group claimed that one of the main reasons for their visit to Hinglaj was its praise in the poetry of Bhittai.

54. The Kapris (also Kapadi) were introduced above. It is likely that they are a part of the Kanphata community as there are repeated references to the Kapris' slit ears in the section *Sur Rāmkalī* chapter 3, 4–8. (Agha 2004, 446). In Sindhi, the word "*kāpṛī*" simply means a "caste of faqirs." This description is not fully clear but likely refers to a community of ascetics, without any particular religious affiliation, like those still found in the interior Sindh today.

recklessness" (Agha 2004, 427) with the goal of distancing the poet from any possible Hindu influence. In such orthodox discourses, Latif's eventual break with the group of ascetics is attributed to a religiously animated disagreement (Agha 2004, 427). Within Sindhi nationalist arguments, however, the extensive description of the Hinglaj shrine in Latif's work is proof of the tolerant inclination of "the Sindhi" and his positive attitude toward other religions. Khadim Soomro describes this role of the Sindhi: "A Sindhi has a special place in human civilization because he stands for good and liberal attitude and behavior. As such, he is always for peace and welfare of the society" (Soomro 2002, 9). Latif's peaceful journey with Hindu nomads is thus paradigmatic for the liberal character of "the Sindhi." Hinglaj, as a place evidently important for both religions—Hinduism and (Zikri) Islam—therefore represents a hallmark of Sindhi-ness.

In summary, the shrine of Hinglaj (or Bibi Nani) marks a major reference point within Sindhi nationalist discourses. First, the equation of Hinglaj with Persian and Chaldean deities—mainly through the writing of colonial authors—furnishes the shrine with an ancient history. Second, the association of the place with Mohenjo-Daro historically binds it to a culture that is pre-Aryan (or pre-Hindu) and pre-Islam, but intrinsically Sindhi. And third, the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif presents Hinglaj as an important religious site for both Islam and Hinduism, thereby transcendent of petty religious boundaries. I suggest calling this particular mode of Sindhi nationalism "syncretic nationalism" due to its reference to religious harmony. Notwithstanding the obsolete use of the term, "syncretism" is appropriate here since the uniting ability of Sindhi nationalist discourse requires an assumption of a radical difference between the two major religious entities in order to prove the power of the tolerant, peaceful, and spiritual Sindhi to yoke them together again.[55]

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55. I am not in the position to judge the connection of the Goddess Hinglaj with other ancient goddesses of the Middle East, but I would like to mention the work of D. T. Potts (2001), who published an enlightening piece on the connection of the worship of Nana in Bactria. At one point, he writes: "The possibilities for [Nana's] conflation with Durga are particularly tempting given the fact that, on Kushan coinage, Nana sometimes 'appears with Oesho (Siva) as her consort,' and the lion-riding goddesses of some seventh century A.D. silver bowls from Choresmia 'may be related to Nana or Durga' " (Potts 2001, 27). Additionally, Potts states that "[h]er worship in Bactria . . . bespeaks a long period of profound influence which has lasted until the modern day, as the shrines in Afghanistan to 'Bibi Nanni' surely attest" (Potts 2001, 31). Although I do not doubt the ancient history of the Hinglaj shrine in Balochistan, I want to emphasize that at this point, I am more interested in the current usage of such *topoi* of origin (or the "chimera of origin" as Foucault says) and how they shape Pakistan's and Sindh's recent religious and nationalist landscape.

2.6 Conclusion

A certain mystery attends the ancient roots of the Goddess worship at the shrine in Balochistan. Although the name Hinglaj and its variations are well documented in a variety of Sanskrit sources, due to the difficulty of dating these texts, it is impossible to find a precise time in which it first appeared in the scriptures. Thus, it can only be assumed that the earliest mention of her must have occurred sometime between the tenth and the fifteenth centuries. But since the desert shrine cannot be properly dated without any archeological survey, the existence of a continuous religious practice at the shrine can also only be speculated upon. Following research on the Charan community, however, Kamphorst estimates that the shrine must have had some religious importance since at least the ninth century. According to Tambs-Lyche, Hinglaj could even have been linked to a cult already in existence as early as the fifth century. Such estimates, however, are merely based on oral histories and hence cannot be conclusively verified.

Aside from cataloging attempts to define a temporal framework for the Goddess tradition in Balochistan, this chapter also discussed how efforts to historicize the shrine are utilized for modern day political claims. The Brahmakshatriya community, for example, employed so-called learned opinions by the Saraswat Brahmins, including mytho-historic genealogies, to advance their upward political and social mobility in the early twentieth century. In Sindhi nationalist discourse, on the other hand, the shrine of Hinglaj is linked to a "real" Sindh that prospered before outsiders began suppressing the province. Within such nationalistic notions of a "golden past," the shrine is appropriated to fit modern concepts of an ideal Sindhi nation.

Before the 1980s, the shrine's character was marked by this reputation for danger—perpetuated in literature, movies, and oral traditions (discussed in detail in Chapter 3). But in recent years, the shrine has become increasingly accessible for anyone in Pakistan, and its reputation is therefore changing. The institutionalization of the pilgrimage, combined with infrastructural developments and the completion of the MCH, have transformed the pilgrimage into one of the largest annual social gatherings of Hindu communities in Pakistan today. The construction of the road meant the displacement of former practices and introduced new possibilities for seeing the shrine and experiencing its salvific powers. One important player within this development is the Lohana community from Las Bela, who institutionalized their traditions with the establishment of the HSM, a development that will be my main interest in Chapter 6.

3

Historical Representations and Recent Changes

3.1 Introduction

Pilgrimage studies generally, and in South Asia particularly, have increasingly focused their attention on religious sites, considering movement to and mobility at pilgrimage places as meaningful and influential parts of ritual journeys (Coleman and Eade 2004, 3). Ingold and Vergunst (2008), however, criticize that ethnographical accounts of religious localities often still describe places and destinations and less frequently include the means by which people reached them (Ingold and Vergunst 2008, 3). Similarly, Ingold describes how travelogues often merely focus on the location and its nearby surroundings (Ingold 2004, 322). The case of the ritual journey to Hinglaj clearly shows that both aspects—mobility and locality—significantly affect the creation of mythohistorical narratives and ritual practices at the shrine. Such representations of place and route influence each other within a wider production of meaning at religious sites. A prominent example of this is the Kedarnath temple in the north of the subcontinent, which (until the construction of a road) required an extremely difficult journey to reach but offered a proportionally greater benefit to those devotees who complete the pilgrimage (Whitmore 2010). Similar characteristics are evident in the case of Hinglaj, which, due to the temple's remote location in the desert, has achieved fame for being an arduous and grueling but spiritually rewarding undertaking. Although the difficult and sometimes fatal journey to the shrine defined representations of Hinglaj for many centuries, recently, due to a plethora of infrastructural changes, the routes to the shrine have been increasingly regulated and organized in ways to match the growing festivities held at the site. Through such changes, images of Hinglaj as a locality—as a valley or a temple—have now become more prominent than

stories about pilgrimage stations and the associated rituals en route to the shrine. However, in newer travelogues and in conversations with visitors and volunteers during the festivals, it is evident that such *topoi* of "traditional" patterns of mobility still occupy an important role within the religious imaginaries among pilgrims at the site. So instead of focusing on the contradiction "between the salvific power of the *tīrthas* themselves and the merit of travel" (Jacobsen 2013, 3)—in other words, between the religious site *or* the route, separately—I argue that mobility and locality are best understood as two mutually influential, albeit often imbalanced, aspects of pilgrimage sites in general and of the Hinglaj temple in particular.

Some oral traditions and mytho-historic narratives about Hinglaj—like the story of Rama's pilgrimage (Hin. *yātrā)*—demonstrate the importance of the specific means of arriving at the shrine to the spiritual merit thereby gained. Many visitors emphasize the physical endeavor and hardship in such allegedly "traditional" journeys and often connect the current absence of *tapasyā* (Skt. also *tapas*), austerity, or simply the kinesthetic experience,[1] with a decrease in spiritual quality at Hinglaj. Incantations, narratives, and travelogues traditionally represent austerity and physical movement as intrinsically connected to the eventual "salvific" (Jacobsen 2013) potential of the *yātrā*. In other words, *topoi* about the difficulties en route play a more prominent role than those of the locality itself.

This chapter will look at various representations of the Hinglaj pilgrimage in order to lay out the crucial role of kinesthetic experiences for the sake of the journey's salvific potential. Because many devotees in Pakistan and India consider these sources as some of the few authentic documentations about the pilgrimage's former reality, these texts form a significant part of Hinglaj's sedimented history. Particularly, more recent sources create forms of authenticity upon the truthfulness of the autobiographical accounts. For an apt analysis, I will, therefore, look at strategies with which autobiographies aim at establishing such authenticity. On this foundation, it will be possible to explain the dramatic changes that followed once the journey's patterns of mobility changed. Before proceeding to my findings, however, I want to contextualize the Hinglaj pilgrimage within the broader literature on South Asia's ritual journeys, particularly within the colorful religious landscape of southern Pakistan.

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1. Edith Turner called pilgrimage a "kinetic ritual" (Turner and Turner 1978, xiii). The adjective "kinetic" actually means the motion of material bodies. In this work, however, I use the term "kinesthetic" to emphasize not only physical motion—often a part of pilgrimages—but also the meaning associated with that physical motion.

3.2 Pilgrimage, Sacred Topographies, and the Philosophy of Travel

The rich body of publications existing in the field of pilgrimage studies, including those focused more narrowly on kinesthetic rituals in South Asia, shows the importance of and scholarly fascination with this topic in recent decades.[2] Research in this field covers typological, functional, and psychological approaches (Morinis 1984); deals with the textual foundations of pilgrimage (Bakker 1990); presents anthropological perspectives (Feldhaus 2003; Gold 1990; Sax 1991); and even explores the topic of pilgrimage without physical movement (Wilke 2010).

The various approaches of these scholars indicate that the term "pilgrimage" cannot be easily defined by specific physical or ritualistic features. For example, although movement is frequently involved in practices described as "pilgrimages," Bharati has emphasized that physical movement, or an association with a particular geographic location, are not requirements as such but rather that the *tīrtha* (Hin. place of pilgrimage) and the *tīrthayātrā* (Hin. pilgrimage) may also be expressed metaphorically (Bharati 1970, 85). Wilke puts a similar suggestion forward in her work on the Goddess Lalita Tripurasundari whose place, as she writes, is not a physical location but rather within the *śrīcakra*, a mental representation of the Goddess's dwelling. On such ritual journeys, sacred landscapes are not missing; they have merely shifted from outer to inner spaces, thus becoming allegories (Wilke 2010, 82).

Such examples show that the term "pilgrimage" refers to concepts not easily slotted into typologies, but which are more easily understood as bearing what Wittgenstein famously called "family resemblances" (Ger. "*Familienähnlichkeiten*"). Wittgenstein asserts in his later work that language does not have to be fully determinable, but rather the meaning of a given term is embedded in certain "language games" that give the particular word or utterance meaning through its usage (Staten 1986, 82–83). Wittgenstein defines this idea through his consideration of the typology of "games," where the different elements of the category "game" do not necessarily share any definite common features, but they may still be distinguishable as "games" from other categories, like "work" or "war."[3] The similar traits found in "games," he

2. For an extensive list of publications, see Rana P. B. Singh's bibliography added to his article, "Holy Places & Pilgrimage in India: Emerging Trends" (Singh 2011).

3. „Betrachte z.B. einmal die Vorgänge, die wir „Spiele" nennen. Ich meine Brettspiele, Kartenspiele, Ballspiele, Kampfspiele, usw. Was ist allen diesen gemeinsam?—Sag nicht: „Es *muß* ihnen etwas gemeinsam sein, sonst hießen sie nicht ‚Spiele'"—sondern *schau*, ob

goes on, are best described as "family resemblances," just as members of a single-family share facial features, eye color, and temperament (Wittgenstein 2003, §67). Thus, for Wittgenstein, any kind of typology is more like a thread of overlapping characteristics defining a certain group of elements than a fixed set of qualities. Certain features might be common to several members of a group, but not to others. This approach allows for the acceptance of common characteristics among a group of things without the need to look for an essence that permeates *all* forms and, thus, can also be helpful in the description of pilgrimages. The term *yātrā*,[4] which I will translate as "pilgrimage" or "ritual journey," shares a family resemblance with many practices, but there is no definite element permeating *all* expressions of the concept. Even the notion of kinetic or physical movement, present in many of them, need not necessarily be a significant feature, as demonstrated by the previous Bharati example.

With this flexibility of the term "pilgrimage" in mind, let me turn now to historical descriptions and modern scholarly approaches to the specific concept of *tīrtha*. The Sanskrit term *tīrtha*—literally meaning "passage," "ford," or "bathing place"—has found its way over time into many other South Asian languages and has thus taken on different shades of meaning (McGregor 1994; Apte 1992).[5] Today in the South Asian context, the term *tīrthayātrā*, or simply *yātrā*, is frequently used to mean a journey to one or more religious or sacred sites. *Tīrthasthāns* (Hin.)—the places where *tīrthas* occur—are often associated with water and purification rituals, and a journey to these sites is considered spiritually beneficial. The concept is of particular importance to sacred practices in the subcontinent; Eck writes that travel to the *tīrthas* is "one of the oldest and still one of the most prominent features of Indian religious life" (Eck 1981, 323), while Jacobsen goes so far as to say that Hindu religiosity is often more centered around sacred space than around sacred text (Jacobsen 2013, 7).[6]

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ihnen allen etwas gemeinsam ist.—Denn wenn du sie anschaust, wirst du zwar nicht etwas sehen, was *allen* gemeinsam wäre, aber du wirst Ähnlichkeiten, Verwandtschaften, sehen, und zwar eine ganze Reihe" (Wittgenstein 2003, §66).

4. In Pakistan, the term *yātrā* is used mostly by Hindu pilgrims. The Urdu equivalent, *ziyārat*, is rarely applied in conjunction with Hinglaj.

5. Eck argues that the word *tīrtha*, as it is found in the older classical texts—like the Vedic *Saṃhitās*, the *Brāhmaṇas*, and the early *Upaniṣads*—does not mean a place of pilgrimage but was rather associated with purity and ritual practice (Eck 1981, 326). She argues that only in the time of the *Upaniṣads*, the epics, and the *Purāṇas* did the word *tīrtha* become commonly used to denote a destination for pilgrims (Eck 1981, 333f.).

6. This concept was demonstrated to me in my experience at the shrine of Hinglaj because for those living in Pakistan, the shrine is in general "experienced" more than it is read about

The earliest extensive noting of *tīrthasthāns* is found in the *Tīrthayātrāpārvaṇa* of the *Mahābhārata*, which mentions various places of worship all over the subcontinent, many of them still in use (Sax 2005, 7168). *Tīrthas* are often found at or near certain natural features like springs, caves, or volcanoes, but can also be at the graves of saints and their disciples. Hence, the term *tīrtha* is not bound to any one type of site, but rather suggests a place that promises some kind of benefit to the visitor.[7] The journey itself, the *tīrthayātrā*, also promises pilgrims spiritual growth and the fulfillment of wishes. Jacobsen sums up these potentially beneficial properties as "salvific." This category includes desired goals that might pertain to worldly wealth and health in life but also to rebirth and salvation. In fact, many sites promise visitors benefits similar to those that could be gained from more elaborate ritual practices such as the *aśvamedha* (Skt.) or the *agnihotra* (Skt.) (Eck 1981, 338), making a journey to these places particularly appealing to pilgrims. However, the precise meritorious capacity of a specific *tīrtha,* as well as the groups it attracts, vary widely. For example, some might be visited mainly by particular *jātis* (Hin. caste, community), others by women or by low-caste communities (Gold 1990, 5). Yet it is rare to find a fully consistent clientele in one or another of these places of worship.

As highlighted by Eck and Feldhaus in their writings on the topic, *tīrthas* do not exist in isolation but rather form a network of many different sacred sites all over the subcontinent. Some of these sites achieve widespread fame and ultimately become highly frequented, nonsectarian places of worship, such as Kashi in Uttar Pradesh or Haridwar in Uttarkhand, while others remain secluded and only locally known. Eck writes, however, that regardless of their fame, all of these destinations connect to an "imagined landscape" that joins topographical elements with mythological stories (Eck 1998).[8] One could say, for example, that the fifty-one (or one-hundred eight) places of the Goddess (Skt. *śākta pīṭha*) mentioned previously belong to such a category of connected *tīrthas,* which combined create a network of mytho-historic narratives associated

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in texts. This is in direct opposition to the situation of those on the other side of the border, in India, who may only read about the shrine since they are unable to visit it.

7. Within the wider textual representation of the Hinglaj pilgrimage, the word *tīrtha* is used in myriad ways, and it seems that every stop along the way to the temple can potentially become a *tīrtha*. Jethamalani demonstrates this very wide understanding of the term *tīrtha* in his book *Hinglāj Tīrth*. For him, all stops on the way to Hinglaj can be called *tīrthas* (Jethamalani 1994).

8. Feldhaus uses the description "mythological geography" for a similar concept (Feldhaus 2003, 10).

with certain features of the landscape. The same can be observed in relation to the sacred sites of other Gods of the Hindu pantheon like Shiva, Krishna, or Vishnu. Feldhaus shares a similar opinion in her work on "regions." Her study on Maharashtra suggests that certain regions are made up of interconnected sites that "people bring together with their bodies . . . with their minds and imaginations" (Feldhaus 2003, 100). For Feldhaus, imagined landscapes consist of the joining of mytho-historic imaginary and bodily practices as well as certain features of the landscape. Within such imagined geographies, different religious or secular landscapes overlap and form networks of their own. Hence, salvific places do not necessarily have to be bound to religious affiliation and can comprise different communities or different faiths. In this way, imagined landscapes with unique physical and symbolic properties are created, varying according to the religious beliefs and ethnic identity of the creators, among other factors.

Eck also highlighted the characteristic of reproducibility in the subcontinent's sacred landscapes. She refers to this as the "duplication and multiplication" of these religious sites, emphasizing that they are not characterized by their uniqueness but rather by this proliferative property (Eck 1998, 166–168). She writes that mythology "take[s] place" in a vast network of interconnected religious sites (Eck 1998, 169), forming a mythological space in which the *tīrtha* is just one part of a whole (Eck 1998, 170).[9]

3.3 Religious Places in the Context of Southern Pakistan

The south of Pakistan, and especially Sindh, offers a whole range of salvific spaces that are frequently visited by different religious communities and form a network of pilgrimage routes or ritual journeys. Sindhi nationalists often emphasize these characteristics of Sindh as a landscape of "coexistence" (see Chapter 2). One example is provided by the *dargāh* (Urd. shrine, tomb of a saint) of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Sehwan Sharif in the Dadu district. Today, local and translocal Hindu and Muslim communities alike visit this shrine regularly, and both take part in the worship of the saint (Boivin 2012, 290). During the *ʿurs* (Urd. celebration, wedding of the saint with God) of Lal Shahbaz, two Hindu families play a crucial role

9. Such multiplications are found around Hinglaj too, where, at the mud volcano Chandrakup, stories of Rama or Shiva are recalled, or where, at the Anil pond, the waters of the River Ganges are said to be flowing (see Chapter 5).

in the arrangement of the henna (Hin. *mehaṁdī*) ceremony at the shrine. According to the legend, it was Shahbaz himself who arranged this process and appointed, in addition to the local Muslim elite, two Hindu families to take part in it (Boivin 2012, 290).

Lal Shahbaz is also the starting point for the pilgrimage to Lahoot la Makan, the abode of the saint Shah Noorani in the Khuzdar district in Balochistan. This pilgrimage route was once connected to the Makran Coast and the abode of "Nani Hinglaj," as Hinglaj is also called in this area. Today, however, this path seems to have been widely forgotten.[10] A vestige of this now obsolete pilgrimage route can be found at the end of the Urdu book *Lāhūṭ lā Makān* by Nazamani, which provides a description of the way from Lahoot to Hinglaj (Nazamani 2009, 26). There are fascinating similarities between the two valleys. Both are small oases with natural springs (Urd. *chaśmah*) and caves in confined valleys. The main attraction in Lahoot is the cave of the saint Shah Noorani, who is said to have lived in this valley. Inside the cave, one finds a curiously shaped stone that is allegedly the image of Alī's camel. Some authors claim that this image used to be worshipped as a *śiva liṅga* before the place became associated with the Sufi saint (Khatri 1973), and indeed, the shape of the stone would support this idea, as I could see during a visit in 2010. Abro suggests that Lahoot was once an important place for Hindu worship (Abro 1991), which is consistent with the history of other Hindu sites in the area that were converted to Sufi centers over time (Boivin 2007). Interestingly, and similar to Hinglaj, Lahoot is currently experiencing a new wave of interest mainly due to a newly constructed road leading to the shrine thus making the journey through the mountainous area easier. However, a terrible bomb blast in November 2016, killing more than fifty people, has curbed the growing influx of visitors and has created a volatile situation for Balochistan's shrines.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, according to Sindhi history, Shah Abdul Latif (1689–1753) had visited Hinglaj with a group of Kanphata Yogis at the beginning of the eighteenth century. His experiences with a group of "Kapri" are found in his *magnum opus*, the *Risālo*. Latif's journey connects the shrine of Hinglaj Devi with his own *dargāh* in Bhit Shah (Sindh), and many legends exist telling of the connection between the saint and the Goddess. There is,

10. In 2010, I met a Punjabi pilgrim in Lahoot la Makan who had just arrived from Sehwan Sharif and confirmed that this side of the pilgrimage route is still frequented; however, he mentioned that the longer path to Hinglaj is no longer used due to the dangerous political situation in the area.

for example, a cave immediately behind the Mata Bhawani temple in Thatta that is rumored to be the place where Latif miraculously reappeared after he was forced to flee from Hinglaj. Legend has it that after making a long and difficult journey, Latif had reached the shrine of the Goddess and was offering the Mother some milk from his palm. In this moment, the image came alive, and the Mother drank from the hands of the saint. This evoked the envy of the Yogis, who then decided to kill him. Latif fled the scene and disappeared into the earth only to re-emerge at Thatta, some 350 kilometers away. Such stories connect Hindu and Muslim sacred spaces in Sindh and show that imagined landscapes do not necessarily have to be separated using clear-cut religious taxonomies.

3.4 Mobility and Memory

One finds the mythological base for sacred geographies or imagined landscapes in a number of sources. It often appears in classical texts, like the *Tīrthayātrāpārvaṇa* of the *Mahābhārata*, but it can also be found in oral traditions or even in small publications sold at *dargāhs* or temples. Aside from these sources, the process of mobility itself can be understood as a means through which mytho-historical narratives are memorized, connected, and remembered over time. In the words of Lorimer and Lund (2008, 192), "[S]torying with events can render landscape memorable." For example, in a story about a desert, it makes a difference if actors cross it by foot, camel, car, or airplane. Thus, mobility, in addition to specific mytho-historical sources, is crucial in the process of connecting sites to regions or imagined landscapes. Geographies experienced through mobile practices join neighborhoods, cities, or even provinces into distinct regions. Depending on the means of mobility, different mytho-historic narratives will emerge. Thus, in considering the shaping of such narratives, one must not forget the motion involved; as Tim Ingold summarizes, "cognition should not be *set off* from locomotion, along the lines of a division between head and heels, since walking is itself a form of circumambulatory knowing" (Ingold 2004, 331).

It is important to understand that landscape is not simply a passive, natural surface but rather a creation of its denizens' daily tasks and habits. It takes on a certain form through patterns of activity and the "repetition of passages walked" (Olwing 2008, 87). Different rhythms of life—often related to available capital—shape landscapes through their repeated involvement with it (Lefebvre 2012). Shields distills this idea down to a single statement: "Over time, spatial practices, the habitual routines of 'place ballets' are concretised in

the built environment and sedimented in the landscape" (Shields 1991, 53). The sedimentation of routinized practices has already been talked about when discussing Laclau's work in the methodological part. Similarly, mytho-historical narratives attached to features of landscape, such as the story of a tree or a certain mountain, also change alongside mobile practices. Thus, imagined landscapes surrounding ritual journeys also depend on the general mobility of potential visitors. A process in the opposite direction—the ceasing of habitual routes—disassociates inhabitants from their (imagined) geographies. In this way, simple changes like the construction of train tracks, highways, and bus connections can lead to new flows of pilgrims and the construction of new imagined landscapes.

To complete this overview of ritual journeys in South Asia, I want to turn to the notion of mobility, especially in the work of Tim Cresswell, because it proves to be an important element in outlining the kinesthetic experience that is crucial for imagined landscapes. Cresswell defines mobility as the entanglement of movement, representation, and practice. In a relatively similar vein to the three-way dialectic that produces space in the reckoning of Lefebvre (2012), which will be useful when I talk about the sedentary aspect of the ritual journey, Cresswell's three elements "are bound up with one another" (Cresswell 2010, 160).[11] Thus, they cannot be independently imagined but instead will always also reflect parts of the other elements. To restate Cresswell's aspects for the specific purpose of analyzing the role of mobility in ritual journeys, one can say (a) that ritual journeys always imply some kind of movement; (b) that this movement is located in discourse as well as in space and that it can be represented, interpreted, or valued in various ways; and (c) that the journey is experienced through the body, which makes bodily practices significant (Cresswell 2010, 160).

A gap between representation and the actual bodily experience of reaching Hinglaj has had an especially significant influence on the dynamics at the shrine in recent years. It is here that the imaginaries of the pilgrimage, sedimented in many texts and perpetuated in oral histories, collide with current practices relating to the travel. Visitors at the shrine often brought up this discord, emphasizing that the site is decaying as a result of people not adhering to the traditional practices; this will be the topic of a later chapter. In many representations of earlier journeys to Hinglaj, the means of getting to the shrine plays a significant role. There, the mobile, kinesthetic aspect

11. However, the elements in Cresswell's triad have a different quality than those found in Lefebvre and are not ontologically equal. For Cresswell, movement occupies a much more important position than the other two elements.

of the journey through the desert serves as a necessary cleansing or testing process before pilgrims can receive the *darśan* from the Goddess (Kshatriya 2005, 65). The physical movement through the harsh desert is associated with atonement for one's sins and the notion of austerity, gathered in the wider sense in the term *tapas* or *tapasyā*.[12] *Tapas*, in fact, is closely linked to the concepts of heat, pain, and purification (Shee 1986, 193),[13] all three of which are associated with many traditional paths to Hinglaj. In older travelogues, such as the *Marutīrtha Hiṃlāj* (which was also made into a film in the 1950s) or the *Āgneya Tīrtha Hiṅglāj*, such austerity is an essential element to reaping the salvific properties of the shrine. Oral narratives and current reflections on the pilgrimage (written or spoken) also often refer to *tapasyā* as a necessary means to access the mystical powers of the site. After establishing this important link of kinesthesis, memory, and salvation in the following text, I will finally introduce some of these sources that assist in understanding the representations of mobility on the traditional and more recent ritual journeys to Hinglaj.[14]

3.5 "Traditional" Routes

"Sirf ākāś aur bālū, bālū aur ākāś"

"Only the sky and sand, sand and the sky."

(ABADHUT 1964, 182)

Representations of the pilgrimage are found in a few vernacular travelogues written in Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Sindhi, Urdu, and in some accounts produced by employees of the East India Company between the beginning of the nineteenth century and the end of British rule in South Asia. In what follows, I will analyze such sources describing the pilgrimage paths prior to the changes instigated by the Hingaj Sheva Mandali (HSM) and the construction of the Makran Coastal Highway (Fig. 3.1).

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12. The primary meaning of the noun *tapas*, from the root "*tap*," is "warming up" or "heating up." In relation to the mental sphere, the word also means "pain" or "torture." Because it lacks a moral or ethical implication, *tapas* cannot be used synonymously with the Western idea of asceticism. However, due to a lack of any equivalent term, I use *tapas* in the wider sense of "asceticism" or "austerity" (Shee 1986, 187).

13. Shee links these three principles in a subsequent order and writes that they share a semantic connection (Shee 1986, 193).

14. By traditional, I mainly intend to point at a time before the institutionalization of the pilgrimage by the HSM and before the Makran Coastal Highway was constructed.

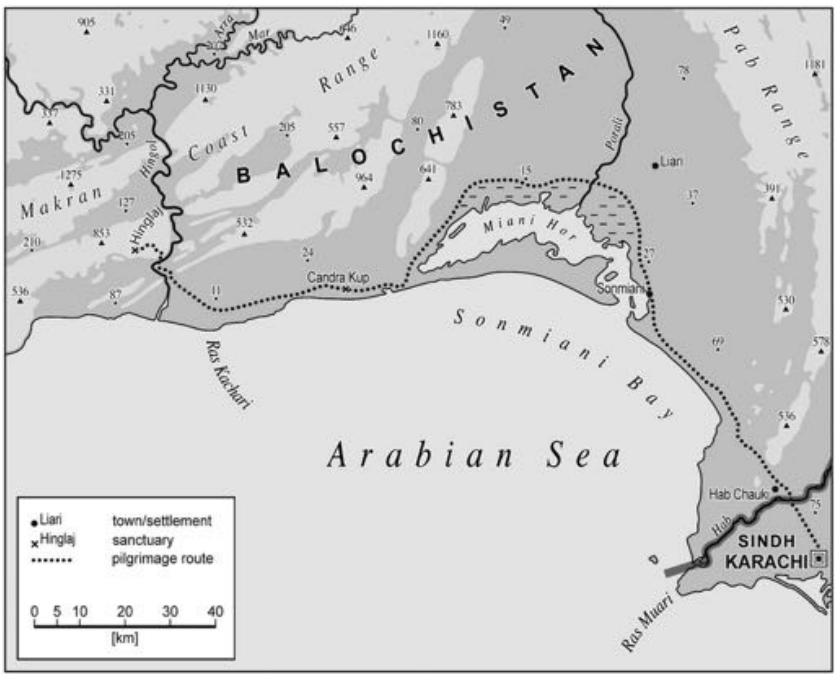

FIGURE 3.1 Sketch of the traditional route to Hinglaj

Unfortunately, there is little in the precolonial literature regarding the actual practices of walking to the Hinglaj shrine. Only a few records from the *akhāṛās* (Hin. wrestling ground, arena; here: pilgrim shelter) in the city of Thatta are able to shed some light on the practice in medieval times. Various Sindhi authors quote these annals as historical evidence of royal visits to the temple (Chhabria 2000; Jethamalani 1994; Ansari 2001). One of the first references to the pilgrimage is found in the work of Chhabria who writes that an aristocrat from Rajasthan, Raja Bij Singh, went to Hinglaj in the year 1499 CE. He cites another trip from the year 1508 CE in which two more nobles, Raja Todarmal and Raja Bharimal, are named (Chhabria 2000, 31). Ansari mentions a journey of Raja Todarmal Brahmakhatri and Raja Bharimal Khatri, who arrived at Thatta in the year 1558 CE (Ansari 2001, 22). Both authors apparently refer to the same group of travelers but give different dates for their arrival. The *akhāṛā* records mention the journeys of other aristocrats from Rajasthan from the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, particularly the journeys of Raja Madhu Singh (in 1792) and Raja Jagat Singh (in 1801). Ansari adds that in addition to these caravans, many pilgrims from Kutch and Jaipur used to visit the shrine (Ansari 2001, 22). Westphal and Westphal-Hellbusch mention an even earlier

pilgrimage undertaken by Hamir Gohil (Gehlote) in the year 1301 CE, which they found in the work of James Tod (Westphal and Westphal-Hellbusch 1976, 114). On the basis of these documents, it appears that pilgrims visited Hinglaj regularly at least from the beginning of the fourteenth century onward.[15]

Pilgrim groups were usually guided by *aguās* (Hin. guide; also *aguvā*) who originated from areas close to Hinglaj (Brohi 1998, 30). Colonel Wilford, who studied the pilgrimage route to Hinglaj around the year 1810,[16] mentions that devotees took different paths to the temple. Wilford gained this information from various pilgrims and *aguās*, but above all from a devotee from Thatta who must have already visited the site around 1770 (Wilford 1851, 233).[17] The colonel not only describes the paths originating in Karachi but also includes routes from Thatta and even as far away as Bhuj. Between Karachi and the port of Sonmiani, the paths were fairly similar. Wilford writes that from the town of Sonmiani onward, pilgrims had three options: one sea route, which was the least frequented; one route that followed along the shore, the path chosen by most pilgrims; and one inland route, traversable only with the help of camels (Wilford 1851, 243).

Isthtiaq Ansari counts ten stops between Karachi and the port of Sonmiani (Ansari 2001, 29–32), where every pilgrim was required to pay a tax.[18] According to oral narratives, this tax at Sonmiani eventually caused many pilgrims to change their route, taking a more difficult path over the mountains of

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15. In conversations with a priest at Koteshwara, Gujarat, I was also told that the earliest record of a pilgrim going to Hinglaj is dated to the fourteenth century. As proof, he named the tomb of a saint close to Koteshwara on which the date of his journey was marked. Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to verify this information. However, Gujarat seems generally a better place to research the beginnings of the pilgrimage because among certain communities, it is a custom to entomb pilgrims in small *samādhis* after their death instead of burning them on the pyre (see Chapter 4). A study of these *samādhis* could shed some light on this question.

16. At the beginning of his 1851 text, it is mentioned that Wilford wrote the article some forty years prior (Wilford 1851, 227). In addition to this, the author mentions the year 1809 (Wilford 1851, 230) in the text, so it can be assumed that his research stems from around the early 1810s.

17. This fact in Wilford's article furnishes additional evidence that the *yātrā* was frequented in the eighteenth century.

18. A 1907 *Baluchistan Gazetteer* (ed. McConaghey) mentions that at a Karachi outpost (possibly Sonmiani), the pilgrims were required to pay a tax of between 1 and 5 rupees, depending on their income and ability. The state earned around 600 rupees annually from these taxes, which would imply a rough average of two hundred visitors to the shrine yearly via the Sonmiani route.

Sehwan in order to avoid the port (and the port tax). Apparently, there used to be a small *yātrā* only to Sonmiani, which was called *choṭī māī* (Joshi 2010, 21). Such accounts make it evident that then, as now, pilgrimage routes to Hinglaj were often chosen not only according to particular religious motivations but also to accommodate time constraints, financial circumstances, and the physical condition of the pilgrims.

Henry Pottinger, who worked as a spy for the British Crown, writes that annual pilgrims to Hinglaj at the beginning of the nineteenth century numbered in the thousands (Pottinger 1816, 297). This observation is supported by the writings of Captain Hart, who estimated the number of pilgrims per year to be between five and six thousand (Hart 1839, 104). The memoirs of Seth Hotchand, a Sindhi Hindu businessman, also confirm that the temple was fairly popular around this time; he writes that in 1805–1806, some members of his family traveled to Hinglaj along with 2,000 other pilgrims (Hotchand 1982, 48).

There are not many accounts of the sea route, which apparently took pilgrims up to the mouth of the Hingol River where they disembarked and continued on foot. It can only be deduced from some narratives and colonial reports that there used to be such a way over the sea. One story exists that describes a whole ship of pilgrims turning into stone just as they were about to reach the shore. One telling of this tale, mentioning a place called "Goorab-i-Sung," was recorded by Hart:

> A wealthy Shet named Kowaljee freighted a vessel from Hindoostan to carry himself and a large party to Hinglaj. When near this spot he exclaimed from the decks of the boat, "My toils are at an end; we have reached the holy ground, I see the Hinglaj mountain!" His companions begged him not to be so decided in his language as he might give offence to Shree Mata, the more particularly as he was approaching her domain by an unusual route. No persuasion however could induce him to believe that further perils awaited him, now that the vessel all but touched the shore; when the Goddess, justly indignant at his arrogance and presumption, transformed the boat and every soul on board into stone. (Hart 1839, 91)

Aside from documenting the existence of sea traffic to the site, the story also carries an ethical implication. Evidently, in the nineteenth century, there was an implied requirement that the path to Hinglaj be taken on foot and through the desert. Over sea was an "unusual route" and eventually even evoked the

wrath of the Goddess, which was exacerbated by the arrogance of the Shet.[19] In this narrative, the two methods of traveling there are clearly distinguished, with the sea route being the less honorable. Goldsmid documents a similar notion existing in the mid-nineteenth century. By chance, he encounters an elderly pilgrim in the area after Chandrakup. Notwithstanding the age of the pilgrim, Goldsmid reports that the man chose to walk because "the journey to the shrine was, according to the rule, to be made on foot" (Goldsmid 1863, 190). This separation also exists today and will become even more obvious in the story of Rama's pilgrimage. Unconfirmed oral accounts also indicate that there was once a ship that left daily from the temple of Koteshwara, on the coast of Gujarat, for the Hingol River. Other devotees in Gujarat say that there was regular shipping traffic from Mandvi on the south coast of Gujarat. Abro, too, confirms that in the "former days" (Sin. "*avā'ilī vaqtan meṉ*") of the *yātrā*, the easiest way to reach the shrine was via the sea route. He writes that pilgrims would land at the mouth of the Hingol River and from there travel the last kilometers on foot (Abro 1991, 27). In Wilford's work, we find that some pilgrimage groups walked as far as Sonmiani and then took a boat from there to cross the bay (Wilford 1851, 250f.). However, most of my informants insisted that the most frequented route for pilgrims from Gujarat was the coastal route described above via the Rann of Kutch; this is confirmed in Kshatriya's writings (Kshatriya 2005, 75).

Before the partition of the subcontinent, pilgrims from the central and eastern parts of India would stop at the Koteshwara temple by the Kori creek in Kutch on their way to or from Hinglaj. Abadhut, a pilgrim from Bengal, describes Koteshwara as the necessary end point of the pilgrimage, without which the whole *yātrā* would be invalidated (Abadhut 1964, 222). Other sites have also been assigned the role of the requisite final stop, such as the temple in Thatta, which today often serves as the last step in the pilgrimage. In contrast, for some communities, a visit to the Jagannath *akhāṛā* in Karachi is mandatory to complete their *yātrā*.

At one time, pilgrims in Koteshwara, especially followers of the Gorakhnath sect, would have the sign of Shiva and Shakti burned onto their forearms. This marking bore witness to their successful journey to Hinglaj. An account of this tradition is found in the work of Briggs, who explains that the branding actually represented the reinstating of the Hindu pilgrims back to their original

19. Shet (Shett) is likely the title of a businessman from the West Coast of India. The title, however, could also be a wrong spelling of the "Seth," which refers to a merchant cast in north India. In Sindh today, "Seth" simply implies an employer or a boss.

Hindu faith following the pilgrimage (Briggs 1938, 109). According to Briggs, there exists a legend that a Muslim woman was the priest of the Goddess in Hinglaj in those days. By ritually applying the *ṭīkā* (Hin. ornamental or sectarian mark) on the forehead of the (Hindu) pilgrims, she turned all of them into Muslims. Thus, on their way back, the pilgrims had to be reconverted to their original faith—hence the branding (Briggs 1938, 106–110). Due to the fact that no similar account is mentioned in any other sources, it is difficult to confirm Briggs' suggestion. The family of Dost Mohammad, who had been the caretakers of the shrine for many generations, could not recall a time when a female was in charge at Hinglaj. Thus, the story of converting pilgrims into Muslims may simply be another in the huge corpus of unverifiable legends surrounding the aloof shrine of the Goddess. However, the branding iron with which the sign of Shiva and Shakti was burned into the forearm of the pilgrims still sits at Koteshwara (Fig. 3.2).

The priests at the temple in Gujarat offer a different interpretation of this tradition. They equate this practice to the rituals that are performed in modern times after the pilgrimage, which are necessary to purify the homecoming pilgrims after their journey to Pakistan. Because the area in which Hinglaj is

FIGURE 3.2 The branding iron of Shiva and Shakti in Koteshwara, Gujarat, 2011.

located is full of "meat eaters" and the pilgrims on their way necessarily have to stay at the homes of Muslims, Kohlis, or other communities considered "impure" (Hin. *bhraṣṭ*), purification rituals are necessary. Hence, the burning of the mark, according to this interpretation, was a sign that these purification rituals had been performed properly. This is a very particular take on the pilgrimage from the perspective of higher-caste communities. This view, however, corresponds with another *topos* often associated with the traditional pilgrimage: the notion of transgressing borders of ritual purity on the way. It can be assumed that Koteshwara was once an important starting and stopping point for devotees from central and eastern India. The practice of marking the pilgrim's forearm at the temple of Koteshwara is documented from the beginning of the twentieth century onward and reflects concerns of ritual purity on the way to Hinglaj. To a certain extent, this ritual is still carried out today, though in a milder form. I was told that only two or three people came to the temple in the past few years to receive the mark. However, due to hygiene concerns, they did not have it burnt onto their forearm but asked instead for the mark of a cold stamp.

The amount of time required to reach the shrine from Karachi varies between accounts. According to Briggs, the journey took twenty-four days (Briggs 1938, 107); however, according to Hotchand, it took two and a half months (Hotchand 1982, 48); and Jethamalani goes as far as to say that the whole trip took six months (Jethamalani 1994, 7). As is clear from the above discussion, the time frame varies substantially due to the route and the modes of transportation chosen by the pilgrims. At the same time, means of transportation are often judged according to the degree of *tapas/tapasyā* or austerity they entail. One discussion of this concept is found in the book, *Marutīrtha Hiṃlāj* (Ben.), by Abadhut, where at one point, the narrator reflects on the meaning of the pilgrimage and the ways of reaching the goal:

> How much merit do you get from the *darśan* of Vishvanath in Benaras if you are rushing to board a train to reach Kashi overnight, so that you can offer flowers and Bilva leaves on the head of Vishvanath, only to be back home the next day to return to your daily routine—only Mother Annapurna knows. But it can't be stressed enough that the hunger to acquire religious merit is not satisfied by that. On the other side, if you come back from Kedarnath and Badrinath after climbing mountains for two months, carrying old Tamarin and Isab Gol bottles on your back, hobbling with bruises on your body—then the satisfaction makes your chest swell with pride. Perhaps for that very reason the glory of Kedarnath is considered bigger than the one in Vishvanath. The secret

> is indeed that the difficulties during the pilgrimage are also *tapas*, austerity. From austerity, one can get a glimpse of the Brahma. Therefore, it is said that austerity is Brahma [*tapohī brahma*]. If you mount a train for a pilgrimage and you come back without any physical toils, then you might see the pilgrimage place [*tīrtha*], but the austerity is left out. A pilgrimage route [*tīrthapath*] should be such a thing after which the mind [*man*], intelligence [*buddhi*], and the ego [*ahaṁkār*] together with the senses become burned [*dagdh*] and like gold. (Abadhut 1964, 154)

With these words, Abadhut obviously wishes to make a strong case for the necessary physical effort of *tapasyā* on a pilgrimage. For him, it clearly matters which way a pilgrim chooses to reach the location. Especially the metaphor of burning the senses, implied in the adjective *dagdh*, speaks of the connection of *tapasyā* and the blazing desert heat (cf. Shee 1986, 187). Thus, he also distinguishes between the salvific powers of the shrine and those of the journey itself. Similar things are found in the legend of the arrogant Shet, in which the "usual" way is considered to be the one over land and not the more comfortable sea route.

On any of these journeys, on foot or by ship, pilgrims associate the features of the landscape with certain mytho-historic narratives. One of more prominent accounts of the traditional journey is the pilgrimage of Rama and his entourage to the abode of Hinglaj. Hart writes that the story of Ramacandra "explain[s] the cause of the various religious rites performed on the journey" (Hart 1839, 80). However, due to the fact that certain stops, especially around today's Karachi, are no longer frequented, a significant portion of the mytho-historic narrative involving Rama and his entourage has now withered and is hardly present today.

3.5.1 Rama's Journey

I have already mentioned the importance of stories and the concept of mytho-historic narratives. However, before I present the story of Rama and his journey to Hinglaj, I would like to recall a few crucial points. I understand narratives in their role as bringing together a particular set of elements into a meaningful sequential order. They have a beginning, a middle, and an end, and they address a certain audience that has a relationship with or simply an interest in their content (Hinchman and Hinchman 1997, xv). A community's narratives convey what must be done and how it should be done but also—and perhaps most important—what should not be done. They can be case studies or examples simplifying abstract concepts of social behavior (Berrenberg

2007, 30). Obviously, such narratives can be oral as well as written. In the case of many ritual journeys, mytho-historic narratives connect landscapes with bodily memories. They recall the hardships of former travelers as well as their successes and faults during their travels. Such narratives give ritual journeys meaning and locate them within the wider religious discourse of a community. They explain what to do on the journey, when to do it, and, again, what should not be done. Colonel Wilford (mentioned previously) described this close relationship between landscape and mytho-historic narratives on the pilgrimage to Hinglaj:

> The account of the pilgrims is, as may be supposed, intermixed with many legendary tales, which, though fulsome, and ridiculous, are nevertheless so much connected with the geography, and history of the country, and they throw so much light on many particulars, that I have found it necessary, to give occasionally some short abstracts of the most interesting. (Wilford 1851, 233f.)

The story of Rama has had an important impact on the moral foundations and the orthopraxy of the pilgrimage for many centuries. Notwithstanding the fact that parts of this story are now widely forgotten, its core—the walking pilgrimage by the king of Ayodhya and his entourage—are still often remembered by visitors to the Hinglaj Mata shrine. The story directly connects the orthopraxy of the pilgrimage to the merit received from such a journey and is thus now, at a time of significant change within modes of mobility to this shrine, often cited.

Many different mythological figures are mentioned in the imagined landscapes of Sindh and Balochistan particularly in the area between Karachi and the Hinglaj Valley. However, no figure was ever as present in the representations of the traditional pilgrimage to Hinglaj as Rama, the seventh incarnation of the God Vishnu. The story of Rama is found in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, an Indian epic consisting of about fifty-thousand lines that are divided into seven major chapters (Skt. *khaṇḍa*) (Goldman and Sutherland 1984, 4–5). The canonized text of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is said to have been composed between 750 and 500 BCE, thus predating the *Mahābhārata* (Goldman and Sutherland 1984, 23). The epic was adapted into many different versions in India, including a very successful television series in the late 1980s, which was refilmed in 2012.

In brief, the *Rāmāyaṇa* tells the story of Ramacandra (Rama), son of Dasharatha, the king of Ayodhya. Rama marries Sita, the adopted daughter of King Janaka. Janaka had found Sita in a furrow as a child (in Skt. "*sītā*" means "furrow") and adopted her as his own. Twelve years after the wedding,

Dasharatha intends to crown his son Rama the new king of Ayodhya, but one of Dasharatha's wives, Kaikeyi, demands that the king first fulfill two promises he had made to her in the battlefield, where he might have died had she not saved him many years earlier. She insists that Rama be exiled for fourteen years and that her own son, Bharata, instead be crowned as king. Dasharatha is bound to keep his word, and so Rama and Sita, together with Lakshmana, another of Rama's brothers, are forced into exile. In their forest dwelling, the demon Ravana kidnaps Sita and insists on marrying her. But she is loyal to her husband so she refuses and is therefore kept captive by Ravana on the island of Lanka. Hanuman, Rama's close ally, goes to Lanka, but Sita refuses to be saved by him, demanding instead that Rama himself come to her rescue. Rama then gathers an army with the help of Sugriva, the king of the monkeys, and challenges Ravana. In the ensuing battle, Rama is finally able to kill the demon Ravana and rescue his beloved wife Sita. In the last part of the story, however, Rama treats Sita with reserve because she has been in the presence of another man. Sita responds to this insult by burning herself on the pyre but when the fire does not touch her, her purity and divine nature are proven. However, Rama still doubts her and sends her away. After years in exile, in despair, Sita begs the earth to release her from this unjust life and to take her back to where she came from. Upon making this plea, the ground opens, and the princess disappears.

Here, Valmiki's Sanskrit version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (in many ways the "canonical" one) ends, and another account then relates the tale to the shrine of Hinglaj. Jethamalani writes that Rama's pilgrimage to Hinglaj is found in the *Sat Koṭī Ānand Rāmā'ian* (Urd.), a text taken from the fifth chapter of the *Yātrā Kāṇḍ* (Urd.), an addition to the canonized corpus of Valmiki's *Rāmāyaṇa* (Jethamalani 1994, 37). Unfortunately, I have not been able to locate this text anywhere. The following is a paraphrase of that story from the bits and pieces I have gathered from a few different texts (cf. Jethamalani 1994, 37–38; Hart 1839, 79–80; Jareca n.d., 110–111).

After the victory over the demon Ravana and his army, Rama returns from exile to ascend to the throne of Ayodhya. Sita then remembers that she had promised to perform a *pūjā* on the shore of the River Ganges if they returned safely. She asks her husband to organize the event so that she can fulfill her oath. Rama invites the citizens of Ayodhya to come with them and promises to have everything prepared for their journey. At the Ganges, Rama orders his brother Lakshmana to see to everybody's well-being and to make sure that no one leaves the festival without having eaten. Lakshmana feeds all the guests, except one sage who goes by the name of Kumbhodar and who refuses to eat the prepared food. When Rama asks him why, the sage answers that he is not

willing to eat from the hands of a Brahmicide (i.e., one who has murdered a Brahmin). Kumbodhar explains that by slaying the demon Ravana, Rama made himself guilty of "*brahm hatyā*" (Urd. slaying of a Brahmin) and thus committed one of the worst sins possible. To cleanse himself of this sin, the sage advises Rama to make a pilgrimage to Hinglaj Mata, the only place that can purify him. Rama follows the advice and immediately leaves with his army for Hinglaj. Sita, Lakshmana, and Hanuman also accompany him. They stop first at Ram Bagh, from where they proceed to climb the "Ungakhera Bherum Luk," a pass in the south of the Pab Mountains. At the pass, the Goddess's army, which guards the entry to her empire, intercepts the group. A fight breaks out in which many of Rama's men die, and after twelve years of battle, the king from Ayodhya and his army must retreat. When Rama sends a messenger to the Goddess to inquire why she fought him, she responds that he must return to his first stop, Ram Bagh, and make the journey again as a simple pilgrim. So Rama leaves his entourage, his army, and vehicles behind and sets out to walk to the shrine, accompanied only by his closest friends. Rama's men are devastated at not being allowed to accompany their lord to the Goddess's abode. The Devi thus promises them that their descendants will, at some point in time, all come back to do the pilgrimage. For guidance through the harsh desert, Rama calls on the pious Lalu Jasraj, a hermit who resides nearby at some hot springs, to be their *chaṛīdār* [Hin. stick bearer, leader] for the *yātrā*. Only now does the Goddess allow the group to cross the pass—the "Ungakhera Bherum Luk—safely. After only a few kilometers, Sita becomes thirsty in the burning desert heat and requests that Hanuman and Lakshmana bring her water. Hanuman tries to extract water from the soil by stomping his foot violently on the ground, but this produces only a dry riverbed. With the same aim, Lakshmana shoots an arrow into the mountain range but only succeeds in detaching one of the hills. In agony, Sita places her palm down on the soil and thereby makes five wells appear, from which the group drinks. After a physically challenging journey, Rama reaches the shrine of the Goddess, and the Devi grants him purification of his sin. To mark his completed *yātrā*, he carves the symbols of the sun and moon on the mountain opposite the temple.

Unfortunately, not much more has been passed on about the other stops on Rama's journey. The group's first stops are very clearly described in Hart (1839) and Wilford (1851) and, notwithstanding the fact that they give different place names, the anecdote about the creation of dry riverbeds in the desert between Hab and Sonmiani is found in the accounts of both authors.[20] The

20. Compare here Hart (1839, 80–82) and Wilford (1851, 249–250).

march from Karachi to Sonmiani shows how densely the landscape features were once connected with the legend of Rama's sin and the orthopraxy of walking to the shrine. Hart even posits that the pilgrimage's attractiveness is based mainly on the legend that Rama himself visited the shrine. Hart also claims that the account of his journey can be found in the *Hiṃgulā Purāṇ* (Hart 1839, 79), a fact that I cannot confirm, at least not with the version available to me.

Today, much less is known about the initial portion of the pilgrimage vividly portrayed in the works of both Hart and Wilford. The ongoing growth of Karachi and the corresponding urbanization of the areas where the early stops occurred caused all but a few of the resting places to completely disappear. In addition, the construction of National Highway 25, which led many pilgrims to begin their journey from the village of Liari in Balochistan (this will be dealt with in detail later in the text), contributed to the increased bypassing of these first resting places. Several of these, such as "Imlee" and "Gorukh Tank"—where Rama is said to have retreated after his defeat by the Goddess—or the "Thonga Bheero" (the site of a ruined temple [Hart 1839, 81]), are no longer commonly known. The only stop mentioned in the story about Rama's pilgrimage to Hinglaj is the Ram Bagh, which is said to be the place where Rama and Sita rested. Today, the Ram Bagh is commonly associated with Aram Bagh, which is located in Saddar town, Karachi. The same is true for the other side of the Hab River—the "Unghakhera Bherum Luk"—which marks the transition into the Goddess's area (Hart 1839, 81). I can only assume that this pass is located in the extreme south of the Pab Mountain range. After the passage, Hart's group descended to a flat space between the Mor hills and the seashore. In this area, he describes three dry riverbeds, which the pilgrims claim were from the time of Rama's journey. The Bahur River, for example, is said to have been created by Hanuman's attempt to get water for Sita. This is probably the Lotan River mentioned by Wilford. In his text, however, the river is said to have been dug out by Rama (Wilford 1851, 249). The river followed by a series of wells reportedly produced either by the power of Sita or by Hinglaj herself. Compare here the two parts in Wilford and Hart. These "Seeta Koowas" (probably Hin. <*sītā kuāṁ*> "the Sita well") are close to a temple called "Gopi Chund Raja"[21] (Hart 1839, 83). I could not identify any of these landmarks today, and a closer analysis of the text—together with a survey of the landscape—would be necessary to determine their current location.

Nevertheless, at a minimum, these accounts show that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, pilgrim groups followed a path to Hinglaj that was

21. Also "Gopichand Raja" is a figure associated with the Nath *saṃpradāy*. This is but another link in the strong association between the Goddess and the Nath sect.

closely related to the mytho-historic journey of Ramachandra and his companions and the landscape it describes. Due to the scarcity of sources, it cannot simply be assumed that the pilgrimage described in them was the form generally followed in those days; however, it does appear that most of the observers from the nineteenth century associated the ritual journey with the adventures of the God Rama.[22] Abadhut and Shastri, both authors from the mid-twentieth century, mention Rama's journey; however, aside from the symbols of the sun and moon opposite the temple, they do not dwell on any details.[23]

What remains among visitors of the shrine today is the notion that Rama, an important god-king, had to come to Hinglaj as a simple pilgrim to rid himself of the sin of killing Ravana—another proof for the importance of the journey's kinesthetic experience (see also Cunningham 1975, 309). On the basis of the textual sources referred to previously, it is clear that parts of Rama's story were associated with features of the landscape that were already disappearing or falling into disuse in the twentieth century. The reasons for this shift cannot be fully reconstructed on the basis of the material available to me. This example shows that, without canonization, connections of topography and mytho-historic narratives associated with Hinglaj have gradually withered. After this account of one of the most important oral histories, I will now turn to written representations of the *yātrā*.

3.6 Literary Representations of the Pilgrimage

It is impossible to provide a comprehensive account of the corpus of literature on the Goddess Hinglaj. Such an inclusive overview requires research into many additional South Asian languages. The following, however, outlines the cornerstones of a literary discourse on Hinglaj and analyzes some of the most influential texts of recent decades. This will help to show how the pilgrimage was—and still is—imagined in South Asia's various corners. I will further show how these influential texts emphasize the journey's kinesthetic element, which is guaranteed through the accounts' "witnessing-I." For elaborating this point, I first need to say a few words about the narrative structure of the stories under scrutiny.

As all of the presented accounts are written from a first-person perspective and claim to be autobiographical, the first point to address here is the

22. Cf. Hart (1840); Cunningham (1975 [1875]); Burton (1877); Wilford (1851). Although it is possible that Cunningham simply copied from Hart, Wilford and Burton give independent accounts of the journey.

23. Cf. Shastri (1977, 54–55) and Abadhut (1964, 2, 212).

construction of the narrative voice within these texts. Within first-person narratives—both fictional and nonfictional—the "I" finds himself or herself in an ambivalent situation. On the one hand, this narrator is an active participant in the story; yet on the other hand, in his or her role as narrator, he or she has enough (time) distance to recount the events as a whole. This split within the I-narrator can be described as having two layers: the "narrating-I" and the "experiencing-I" (Vogt 1990, 71).[24] The narrating-I is able to give an account of himself or herself and thus is in the position to reflect back on the events from an already accomplished location in time. He or she is able to organize a sequence of elements into a teleological order, which in retrospect can also be supplied with new meaning since the narrating-I is able to justify his or her position, to clear up misunderstandings, and to admit failure. In other words, the narrating-I is able to weave contingent events together into a coherent story in which every detail fits into a flow of events, ultimately climaxing in the temporal location of the narrating-I. The experiencing "I," by contrast, acts and reacts to the events within the story's timeline without the benefit of hindsight. The situation's final result is uncertain and hence supplies the story with an arc of suspense. These two positions are often closely entwined and frequently interchanged.

This ambivalent role of the I-narrator becomes particularly problematic in nonfictional autobiographies or memoirs, where the historical author (in opposition to the I-narrator) supplies yet another analytical layer within the narrator's voice. Autobiographical writers have a vested interest in gaining the readers' trust to make them believe their account of the events described. The autobiographical narrative, however, is also part of literary discourse and thus needs to conform to a regime of (literary) writing (such as rules about how to construct a plot). According to Renza, autobiography necessarily "borrows [ways of writing] from the methodological procedures of the imaginative fiction" (Renza 1977, 2). This places autobiographical accounts written from the perspective of an I-narrator somewhere between literary "design" and historical "truth" (Renza 1977, 2). Because each partially comprises the other—the I-narrator cannot exist without following a certain literary style of writing, and the presence of an I-narrator makes it possible to speak of autobiographical elements—discussions about historical accuracy in autobiographical accounts are structurally limited as such accounts follow a certain literary regime. An author "designs" the I-narrator's character simply by choosing which elements of an episode are recalled and which are left out to fit into a certain plot.

24. This is a translation of Vogt's German terminology: "*erzählendes Ich*" and "*erlebendes Ich*."

Aside from the choosing of elements to recall, the present situation of the historical author as recounted by himself or herself also plays a role in the reflection on events. The temporal moment of this retrospection is crucial to the composition of memory because a coherent life narrative helps to construct the "durable character of an individual" (Ricoeur 1991, 77). The point in time from where this memory is produced influences the composition and might even "subordinate" the history to such an extent that the narrative represents "the writer's present self-identity" (Renza 1977, 3).[25] In other words, the composition of autobiographical elements necessarily reflects the present situation of the author, who will, as mentioned above, organize memory into a narrative plot.

Furthermore, the autobiographical account also reflects the assumption of an implicit audience. McLean, Pasupathi, and Pals thus describe autobiographical narratives as "situated stories." By that, they mean personal memories that are "created within a specific situation, by particular individuals, for particular audiences, and to fulfill particular goals" (McLean, Pasupathi, and Pals 2007). Their concept of situated stories asserts that autobiographies are not stable presentations of a certain part of life but that they also change and grow alongside the author's own development. An imagined audience serves here as a canvas upon which these memories are projected in a finalized form. The recollection of past events must take into account to whom the narrative will be ultimately presented. Here, questions such as publication date, publishing house, and even the language in which the story is composed must be considered.

These issues highlight the noncentral role that the strict factuality of autobiographical texts plays to its meaning; just as it is impossible to fully distinguish the narrating-I, the experiencing-I, and the author, the objective truth of such texts is indiscernible. Autobiographical elements always raise the predicament of determining who and what counts as the "I" within the story. They seem to melt literary fiction, self-development, and historic "truth" together into one account. For this reason, it may be more appropriate to turn one's analysis away from notions of factuality in favor of questions about why and for whom such authenticity might be important.

To sum up: Due to the different layers found in the narrating voice of any first-person account, the "I" is in a difficult position, namely, between the experiencing-I and the narrating-I. This becomes even more complex the

25. Such is often the case in the memoirs of public or politically active people, where certain kinds of actions are retrospectively justified (cf. Musharraf 2006).

moment one takes the name of the author on the book's cover into account. Here regimes of writing, life circumstances, and implied audience also influence the relationship between author, narrator, and protagonist. At this point, another aspect of the I-narrator in autobiographical accounts on the Hinglaj pilgrimage becomes visible: the "witnessing-I." Under this aspect, the authorial name (the association of author, narrating-I, and experiencing-I) confirms the truth of the witnessed events, which has crucial implications for this particular corpus of texts; because Hinglaj has been a destination for which believers have yearned for many centuries, devotees often judge textual and visual productions describing the journey according to their "authenticity" rather than their literary sophistication. This is, of course, judged strictly from the perspective of Goddess devotees who comprised the majority of those I encountered during the course of this study. Such an approach is exemplified in Ratnu's book on Hinglaj when he writes of the movie, *Marutīrtha Hiṃlāj*: ". . . there is nothing worth mentioning, only the cinematography was prominent. In the whole film the [Hinglaj] mountains are not shown and it was not filmed at the proper place" (Ratnu 2007, 8). The "witnessing-I" confirms in this case the events for potential future pilgrims. In this way, devotees often treat texts on Hinglaj as guidebooks rather than as literary prose.

How is the "witnessing-I" characteristic of the narrator established? Literary scholar Philippe Lejeune identifies one obvious and one implicit way in which this can be done (Lejeune 1989, 14). The obvious is when the name of the author is the same name mentioned in the following text. One part of Narasimha Jasol's narrative exemplifies this method. Describing being approached by a stranger during his stay in a Karachi hotel, Jasol writes: "One of them asked: 'Where can I find Narasimha Jasol among you?' I was startled. Who could be this man asking for me in Pakistan?" (Jasol 2008, 92). Here the "I-as-witness" is reinforced through the interpellation of the narrator with the name of the author found on the book cover.

The more implicit way in which the "witnessing-I" is established, according to Lejeune, is through an "autobiographical pact" (Lejeune 1989). This is a connection implicitly established between the reader and the author whereby the reader simply assumes that the author and the narrator are identical. This relationship, however, is only possible on the basis of certain agreements; the reader only believes in the sameness of author and narrator—and thus in the truth-claims of the narrative—if certain parts of the pact are respected. For example, "vital statistics" (date of birth, ethnicity, language) should be identical between the narrator and the author (Lejeune 1989, 11). Furthermore, the story should relate to a world that can be linked to the vital statistics of the author (e.g., was the author really at that time at this place?). In this way, less

obvious accounts in which the narrator and the author are only implicitly associated are also explained. With the help of the autobiographical pact, the name guarantees the "identicalness" of the author, the narrator (narrating-I), and the protagonist (experiencing-I), which produces a witnessing-I.

For many devotees and authors I have met, this witnessing aspect of the autobiographical pact was more important than the texts' literary quality. Texts are often only judged according to this witnessing aspect. Accepting obvious and implicit forms of the autobiographical pact, in the following re-narrations I will, for the sake of clarity, associate the name of the author with the narrator and the protagonist of the story. With these general considerations in mind I turn to the first text to be discussed here, *Marutīrtha Hiṃlāj*.

3.6.1 Abadhut's *Marutīrtha Hiṃlāj*

The extensive Bengali novel *Marutīrtha Hiṃlāj* (*The Desert Pilgrimage to Hinglaj*) by Dulalchandra Mukhopadhyay, also known as Abadhut (1910–1978), was published in 1957 and translated into Hindi in 1964 by Nihararanjan Chaudhari. Abadhut's first-person narrative of the ritual journey was adapted into a fairly successful film of the same name in 1959 starring the Bengali actor, Uttam Kumar (1926–1980). Both of these works contributed hugely to the dissemination of the pilgrimage narrative among the wider public. The 1959 film, in particular, cast Hinglaj into popular culture and helped foster the pilgrimage's extremely arduous image. These two accounts alone arguably comprise the bulk of what is, at least in India (but also in parts of Pakistan), the dominant image of the Hinglaj pilgrimage. As the film is a fairly accurate adaption of the novel, I will summarize the story as provided in the Hindi translation by Niharanjan Chaudhari (1964).

Abadhut, a Bengali ascetic, reaches the main gathering place for the pilgrimage to Hinglaj, the Nagnath *akhāṛā* in Karachi, in the month *āṣāṛh*, 1946 CE. It is from this point on that members of the local Nath community guide pilgrims once or twice a year to the shrine of Hinglaj Mata (Abadhut 1964, 1). People from all parts of India—such as Gujarat, Rajasthan, or Bengal—meet there to await the beginning of the journey that will carry them into the desert of Balochistan. After a month, enough people have gathered to comprise a pilgrimage party, and cameleers are arranged from the area around the Hinglaj shrine to guide the group (Abadhut 1964, 4).

The journey is financially supported by a Jain businessman who is himself a Goddess devotee and has already travelled to many places of Goddess worship, such as Calcutta's Kali temple or the distant *śakti pīṭh* of Kamakhya. The businessman also organizes a camel for an elderly Bengali woman, Bhairavi,

who cannot walk by herself. He advises the pilgrims to carry many onions with them in case their water runs short (Abadhut 1964, 3).

After the arrival of two Balochi camel drivers, Gulmohammad and his son, Dilmohammad, the group is ready to set out for the River Hab along the border of Karachi. There the group gives an oath to an old priest (*prauṛh paṃḍā*) who ties an ochre-colored piece of cloth around their heads and makes them swear that they will refrain from any violence, that they will help each other, and that under no circumstances will they give any other pilgrim water from their own water bottle (*surāhī*). After this oath, the group meets their *aguās*, Rupalal and Sukhalal, two young boys around the ages of twelve and eighteen, who serve as their ritual guides through the desert. Rupalal carries the *chaṛī*, a stick, which is meticulously worshipped and symbolizes the protection of the Goddess. They cross the River Hab, and their pilgrimage begins (Abadhut 1964, 6).

After three days of walking through the desert toward the small coastal town of Sonmiani (*śon'beṇī*), Abadhut catches sight of something in the distance. First he believes it to be an illusion, but then he realizes he has spotted two real people, a man and a woman, who are lying unconscious in the desert (Abadhut 1964, 19). Abadhut and Gulmohammad run toward them and carry them to the group's resting place, where Bhairavi sprinkles water on their faces, breaking the oath given just a few days earlier at the river's edge (Abadhut 1964, 20). When the couple awakes, the group learns their identities: Kunti, a young woman from a well-to-do family (Abadhut 1964, 35), and Thirumal, an orphan who makes his living as a musician (Abadhut 1964, 33). After the two recover from their exhaustion, the group listens to their story.

Kunti and Thirumal fell in love, but because of their different social backgrounds, Kunti's family would not have allowed the relationship so they decided to elope, leaving Bikaner in Rajputana (Abadhut 1964, 27). In hope of a new life, they came to Karachi, but luck was not on their side, and the pair struggled to survive. When they heard of the pilgrimage to Hinglaj, especially given the presence of the rich Bengali woman (Bhairavi) accompanying the group on a camel, they saw a chance to feed themselves for another month. But because the group had already departed, the couple had to follow behind them into the desert (Abadhut 1964, 37). On the way, however, thieves from Peshawar robbed the couple and raped Kunti. They eventually succumbed to their injuries and fatigue in the desert, where Abadhut later saw them. After hearing their story, the pilgrims decide to take them to the next village, Sonmiani.

In Sonmiani, the group must report to the police station to pay their taxes for the pilgrimage. The officer in charge, however, is not present, and so they have to wait for a few days. One night a noise awakens Abadhut and

he overhears a conversation between Thirumal and Kunti. Kunti says that she wants to stay with the pilgrims and go to Hinglaj to repent her sins, but Thirumal tries to convince her to run away with him. When Thirumal realizes that Kunti plans to leave him, he goes mad and runs blindly into the sea. Abadhut, who has witnessed the entire scene, manages to pull him out of the water in time (Abadhut 1964, 44–45). Thirumal is saved, but he has lost all conscious contact with the world.

After two days and two nights at Sonmiani (Abadhut 1964, 46), the group sets off in the direction of Chandrakup, the mud volcano, where they will ask for permission to proceed to the shrine of Hinglaj Mata (Abadhut 1964, 47). Kunti takes the deranged Thirumal by the hand, and he walks along with them. Kunti's secret hope is that at Baba Chandrakup, Thirumal will be healed of his mental illness (Abadhut 1964, 48).

One of the group's members is a Brahmin, Jayashankar, who is undertaking the journey with a few of his disciples (Abadhut 1964, 49). Jayashankar is a staunch believer in purity and becomes increasingly upset with the pilgrimage because, according to him, the rules of ritual purity are not being followed. He complains, for example, that it is not proper to do a *darśan* at one of the many holy places along the way without first taking a bath. Because this is not possible in the desert, he is upset at the loss of some of the potential spiritual merit to be gained (Abadhut 1964, 50).

En route to the *guru-śiṣya* pilgrimage stop, the group is attacked by robbers. These bandits are the same men from Peshawar who had already preyed upon Thirumal and Kunti. Gulmohammad and Dilmohammad fight them, and with the help of Thirumal, who suddenly awakens from his disturbed mental state to join the struggle, they are able to kill the men and thus take revenge. They leave the three bodies in the open for animals to eat, and they carry on with their journey (Abadhut 1964, 54).

For the next few days, the group stays with a well-keeper whom they meet along the way. After some rest, they are able to proceed toward Chandrakup (Abadhut 1964, 61); ahead lies one of the most demanding parts of their journey. During this portion of the trip, the group almost becomes lost in the desert (Abadhut 1964, 69–70), and they face a storm that almost separates them (Abadhut 1964, 74–75).

The area before Chandrakup is quite arid, and there is nothing to protect the pilgrims from the blazing heat. Strangely, over the course of these days, Thirumal begins to recover. He realizes where he is and starts to engage with the rest of the group (Abadhut 1964, 78). Unfortunately, Jayashankar grows increasingly sick, and one of the Brahmin's students, Maniram, also begins to show signs of extreme fatigue (Abadhut 1964, 80–81). Due to the dire

conditions, Maniram comes down with a high fever and must be tied onto the back of Bhairavī's camel (Abadhut 1964, 85). Jayashankar also becomes so weak that he cannot walk any farther, and Thirumal, newly refreshed, decides to carry the man on his shoulders (Abadhut 1964, 87). Everyone is exhausted, and the group begs Rupalal for rest, but the *aguā* tells them they must reach the next resting spot or else perish in the desert.

After some time, they hear Thirumal suddenly scream. When the pilgrims reach him, they see that Jayashankar has died on Thirumal's shoulders. The Brahmin's dead limbs are still clutching Thirumal, who frantically tries to detach the corpse from his back until he eventually faints (Abadhut 1964, 90). Under such exhausting circumstances, the group is unable to perform any death rituals for the Brahmin, so instead, they simply bury him in the hard desert ground (Abadhut 1964, 91). Thirumal regains consciousness but has again slipped into madness and does not recognize anyone. Utterly fatigued, the group finally reaches the resting place, and they all fall asleep immediately without eating (Abadhut 1964, 92).

They awaken the next day to the same extreme heat. Because of his persistent madness, the pilgrims cannot make Thirumal drink any water; and his physical condition worsens. Maniram is also not recovering. Fortunately, the pilgrims find a small piece of wood in the sand, so at least they are able to build a fire and prepare some tea (Abadhut 1964, 99). After the break, the group is ready to leave, but suddenly Thirumal insists on turning around to return to Karachi, demanding that Kunti come with him (Abadhut 1964, 102). A quarrel evolves in which Rupalal convinces Thirumal to let go of Kunti by tricking him into believing that they will all turn around now and return to Karachi. Rupalal takes Thirumal by the hand, and they proceed in the direction of Chandrakup. The rest of the group follows (Abadhut 1964, 102).

Maniram also begins to get better, and the group has surpassed the most difficult part of the journey. They meet a local who invites them to stay with him (Abadhut 1964, 116). At the man's house, Thirumal seems to lighten up again; he even starts to talk and smokes some marijuana with the other pilgrims (Abadhut 1964, 124). During the night, however, Thirumal tries to strangle Kunti. He is stopped by the others and he then runs off into the desert (Abadhut 1964, 125–131). The group decides to leave without him (Abadhut 1964, 130). Kunti is devastated by this incident and continues to withdraw further into herself.

A few kilometers from Chandrakup, another pilgrim, Popatlal, approaches Abadhut. Popatlal is nervous about their imminent arrival at the volcano and tells Abadhut that he is guilty of murdering a little girl, a sin that has been haunting him for the past twelve years (Abadhut 1964, 136–140). The episode

creates an opportunity for Abadhut to ponder the concepts of sin and repentance (Abadhut 1964, 141). He also reflects on the path they have taken and the pilgrims' motives to undertake such a grueling journey (Abadhut 1964, 154). After several more hours of walking, they finally see the contours of Chandrakup in the distance.

Before the group ascends the mud volcano, Rupalal instructs them on the proper proceedings at Chandrakup (Abadhut 1964, 156–157). He says that to receive permission to continue their journey, they must worship Chandrakup and yell out their sins at the crater's edge. Only then will they be allowed to carry on with their journey. The pilgrims also bake a small cake (*roṭ*), which must be offered to the volcano. After an emotional night in which many pilgrims worry acutely about their upcoming confessions at Chandrakup, the group begins their ascent (Abadhut 1964, 164).

On the top of the volcano, Rupalal offers the *roṭ* prepared by all the pilgrims together by throwing it into the crater (Abadhut 1964, 166). One after another, the pilgrims are called to confess their sins. At one man's turn, however, the wind stops and the volcano's bubbles cease to rise. This is understood as a sign that the pilgrim has not confessed to all of his sins, and so Rupalal implores him to repent. The man initially hesitates but then admits that he impregnated a servant who was subsequently sent away from his house a few years ago (Abadhut 1964, 168). After that, the volcano's bubbles again begin to rise (Abadhut 1964, 169). Suddenly, Thirumal appears on the rim of the crater and with wild laughter jumps into the volcano, submerging beneath the mud (Abadhut 1964, 169). In horror, the whole group runs down the volcano's side, including those who have not yet confessed their sins (Abadhut 1964, 170). Exhausted and terrified, they proceed toward Hinglaj without returning to Chandrakup. After this incident, Kunti retreats completely into herself.

After a few more days of walking, they reach the River Aghor, where the pilgrims clean their teeth and dig the *dātun* twig into the earth according to the required custom (Abadhut 1964, 196). At the shore, they meet an ascetic called the Aghori Baba or Nanī's Pir (Abadhut 1964, 197). The ascetic originally lived at the Nagnath *akhāṛā* in Karachi, the place from which the group started their journey, but he had eventually decided to leave everything behind to serve the Goddess at the shores of the Aghor River. The pilgrims give him the *gurudān*, a donation, and cross the river (Abadhut 1964, 199).

On the other side, Rupalal digs the *chaṛī* into the earth to indicate the journey's completion (Abadhut 1964, 201). But instead of celebrating the arrival, Rupalal is worried about the course of the pilgrimage. In a discussion with Abadhut, the young *aguā* says that the group repeatedly disregarded the proper rules of the pilgrimage (Abadhut 1964, 204). Particularly in light of Thirumal's

suicide at Chandrakup, which prevented a few pilgrims from confessing their sins, he feels the group should not have been allowed to proceed—let alone cross the River Aghor. Not knowing what to do, Rupalal asks the Aghori Baba for advice. In response to the question whether Rupalal can lead the group to the other side of the river, the ascetic answers bluntly, "Of course they can! Take them all right away to the Mother's abode; you're a greenhorn, what do you understand of the rules?"[26] As a result only of this response, Rupala submits, and the group is able to cross to the river's opposite bank.

Early the next morning, the pilgrims proceed to the shrine of Hinglaj, where they bathe and put on fresh clothes to enter the womb of the Mother (Abadhut 1964, 209). At the shrine, they find only a small altar (*bedī*) on which a lamp is burning (Abadhut 1964, 209). The place is decorated with oleander flowers, incense, and candles (Abadhut 1964, 209). All are gathered, and Rupalal tells Abadhut that, as the *mahaṃt* (Hin. actually, "superior of a monastery") of the group, Abadhut will be the first to enter the cave. In the light of the candles, Abadhut sees a narrow passage leading around the altar (Abadhut 1964, 210). After entering the tunnel, he has a vision of the Goddess who laughingly gazes at him, and only a few minutes later, he exits the passage on the other side. The Aghori Baba receives Abadhut and advises him never in his whole life to speak of what he has seen in the tunnel (Abadhut 1964, 210). One pilgrim after another is led into the passage. When they all have crawled through the tunnel, the Aghori Baba shows the group the symbols of the sun and the moon, which, as he explains, were carved into the mountain by Ramachandra on his journey to Hinglaj (Abadhut 1964, 212).

After the *darśan*, the group sets out to Akash Ganga (*ākāś gaṃgā*), another pilgrimage stop where they are to pluck a twig from a certain kind of tree (Abadhut 1964, 213). Abadhut, Bhairavi, and Kunti decide not to go with them, opting instead to return directly back to the Aghori Baba's abode. After they have crossed the river, however, they become lost in the mountains, without any water (Abadhut 1964, 215). Stumbling around in the desert, they finally break down. Completely fatigued, Kunti loses her mind; she tries to hurt herself and also attacks the other two. Abadhut attempts to talk sense into her, but Kunti—like Thirumal before her—has lost all connection with the world. She rips off her sari and disappears in the desert. Bhairavi and Abadhut are too weak to follow her, and they lose consciousness (Abadhut 1964, 220).

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26. "*Avaśya sakeṃge. Sīdhe sab ko māṁ ke sthān par le jā. Tū beṭā kal kā baccā hai, tū vidhān-qānūn kyā sam'jhegā?*" (Abadhut 1964, 204).

Ultimately, the two are found by Gulmohammad and are taken back to Karachi. The story ends as Abadhut boards a ship to Koteshwara in Gujarat, the pilgrimage's last stop (Abadhut 1964, 222).

The Bengali novel *Marutīrtha Hiṃlāj* revolves around an urban, liberal-minded Bengali ascetic and gives a vivid first-person account of the journey's cycle in the 1940s. The narrative implies a link between the author and the narrator, even though the "I" in the text does not explicitly relate to the name on the book's cover. In the preface to the Hindi translation, however, the translator, Nihararanjan, refers to a personal meeting with Abadhut, which provides additional support for the implicit link between author and narrator. Without this supplement given in the translation, *Marutīrtha Hiṃlāj* presents a typical example of an autobiographical pact between the reader and the narrator (Lejeune 1989).

Aside from descriptions of the pilgrimage, the account's I-narrator reflects on various aspects of the pilgrimage throughout the book and frequently presents his opinion on broader topics.[27] These comments on the grueling route and its manifold difficulties emphasize three principal themes: (a) renouncement and austerity are portrayed as an important part of the ritual journey (Abadhut 1964, 154); (b) the narrator is critical of the pilgrimage and its rigid rituals (Abadhut 1964, 49, 91); and (c) the ritual journey is described as a metaphor for life in which all humans are pilgrims on an unknown path (Abadhut 1964, 132). These three motifs—(physical) austerity and kinesthesis as a primary component of the ritual journey, a critical approach to unreflective rituals, and the route as metaphor for life's path—recur time and again in the Hinglaj literature, for example, in the next account below.

One distinctive feature of Abadhut's travelogue is the elaborate narrative structure, tied together by the unfortunate love story of Kunti and Thirumal, who each succumb to their desperate situation, eventually finding separate tragic deaths in the desert. Kunti is forced to leave her social environment due to her socially unacceptable love for Thirumal, a simple musician and day laborer. When Thirumal is unable to protect Kunti from the robbers, he is confronted with all his failure and escapes into madness. Haunted by her past and to repent for her sins, Kunti decides to continue with the group on the pilgrimage. This storyline of unacceptable love blends into the general social

27. For example: pilgrimage (Abadhut 1964, 57f.); tantra (Abadhut 1964, 66–67); death (Abadhut 1964, 73); heat and the sun in the desert (Abadhut 1964, 93); the possibility of peace of mind (Abadhut 1964, 103); fate (Abadhut 1964, 110); the landscape (Abadhut 1964, 115); the urbanity of Calcutta (Abadhut 1964, 123); pilgrimage as a metaphor for life (Abadhut 1964, 132).

criticism that the protagonist frequently presents in his flashbacks, supporting the story's general tone. It is precisely this romantic plot, however, that generates the greatest criticism of Abadhut's account among (mainly Indian) devotees today, who argue that it distracts from the account of the actual pilgrimage. Here, the intricate plot of the text causes the "witnessing-I" to lose his credibility. I will elaborate on this later in the text.

Kunti and Thirumal's story climaxes at Chandrakup, where the mentally deranged Thirumal jumps into the volcano in an act of self-sacrifice. This theme of sacrificing oneself in the sin-cleansing volcano, where pilgrims are supposed to confess their transgressions, is particularly interesting and occurs in a few other accounts as well. Hart, for example, mentions the death of a Gosain who was so devastated by his own sins that he leapt into the crater (Hart 1839, 90). Similarly, Ansari writes that he heard a Nepali pilgrim committed suicide by jumping into the mud volcano (Ansari 2001, 296). Abadhut's account of this trope of self-sacrifice is curious, as it portrays Chandrakup as an actual volcano filled with deadly lava (molten rock) able to kill immediately on contact.[28] The geothermal activities at Chandrakup, however, make suicide there a difficult endeavor. Because Chandrakup's activity is caused by the rising of methane gas, its surface is neither hot nor smoke-emitting (Chapter 5). In addition, the mud at Chandrakup's surface often turns fairly solid (Schaflechner 2011, 21:40) and would demand a great deal of determination from the party attempting suicide to submerge in the volcano. As mentioned previously, Hart captures this motif of self-sacrifice as early as the nineteenth century, but his account also notes that it took the suicidal Gosain four attempts to finally sink into the volcano (Hart 1839, 90)—a detail that would have greatly detracted from the dramatic impact of the scene.

For Abadhut—as later for Shastri—the volcano is a suitable literary *mise en scéne* not only serving as a climax for the Kunti-Thirumal storyline but also crystallizing many themes present throughout the plot. This renders the events around Chandrakup particularly interesting to examine in detail. The author also uses Chandrakup, for example, as an opportunity to elaborate on the pilgrims' motives for undertaking the grueling journey—a piece of

28. The notion of the hot and smoking Chandrakup is also presented by Abadhut when he describes the group's approach to the mud volcano. Abadhut writes: "Then this very sin [which has been thrown into Chandrakup] turns into smoke and dissolves in the endless sky. It becomes a cloud and rains down on the whole world; in the form of water [this sin] falls down on peoples' heads" (Abadhut 1964, 147). This impression of the smoking crater was later adopted in the visual representation of the same scene in the film *Marutīrtha Hiṃlāj*. The motif of Chandrakup as an active volcano is also found in the work of Jasol, who wrote: "There is a *śivakuṇḍ* on this mountain, out of which lava is erupting" (Jasol 2008, 46).

information that, until then, has not been presented. Through characters like Popatlal, the pilgrimage's purification aspect is highlighted, and the reader obtains insight into the sorrows of the involved *personae*.

The Chandrakup scene also deals with the notions of rule-following and rule-breaking along the journey. This point is made clear in the breaking of the oath, when Bhairavi gives Kunti water from her bottle (Abadhut 1964, 20). Furthermore, after Thirumal's suicide, many pilgrims failed to perform the proper rituals at the volcano and thus traditionally would not be allowed to proceed to Hinglaj. Yet the story's main ritual authority for the pilgrimage, the wise Aghori Baba, dismisses such rules as obsolete. By saying: "*tū beṭā kal kā baccā hai*"—"you're a greenhorn"—the sage implicitly supports the progressive mindset of the I-narrator, who, throughout the story, reflects critically on the practice of blindly obeying archaic rules. Aghori Baba, hence, provides support for the overall message conveyed by the account.

Chandrakup therefore serves as one of the main stages for conveying the subtext of the story. Here, the protagonist openly oscillates between his liberal, rational strains of thought and the undisputable belief in the power of gods and demons. This is shown the moment one of the pilgrims fails to fully confess his sins, and the bubbles of the volcano immediately cease to appear. With this episode, the author leaves open the possibility of divine intervention.

Last, I want to consider the intriguing final scene in the Hinglaj Valley, after the group has safely reached the shrine. There the *unio mystica* is described in two steps: the I-narrator describes his experience in the tunnel leading around the *bedī* as a vision of the Mother Goddess. This reported image basically resembles her common iconographic form (Abadhut 1964, 210). The description is followed immediately by the Aghori Baba's advice to the protagonist to never speak of what he saw in the cave ("*sāvadhān beṭā—kabhī māṁ kā yah ādeś mat bhūlo*" [Abadhut 1964, 210]). If the I-narrator had accepted the words of the Aghori Baba, the reader would never have received the description of his vision. Yet, as the I-narrator does quite clearly recount what he has seen inside the tunnel, Aghori Baba's words—just a few pages earlier established as the authority on the rules and rituals for the journey—create a paradox. This apparent contradiction can be analyzed from at least two different angles.

One interpretation could be that the author wanted to use Aghori Baba's words to hint at some deeper mystery found at the shrine. Harder deals with such predicaments of secrecy in his work on the Maijbhandari and describes them as a paradox where "a certain code of secret knowledge [here, the image of the Goddess] is exposing itself to the non-initiated public [here, the reader], while insisting all the while on its marked property a secret code [here, Aghori Baba's advice]" (Harder 2011, 279). By supplying a small piece of

information—the well-known (but not exceptional) description of the iconographic picture of the Goddess Durga—followed by the Aghori Baba's advice, the author creates suspense. This tension, rather than eliminating mystery, instead implies yet another hidden secret inside the tunnel that has not been mentioned. This language of secrecy carries a certain "symbolic capital" (Bourdieu 1998) gained through the indication of a potential additional element without any further elaboration (Urban 1998). The author validates the implied content precisely by referring to its secrecy. Of course, an inverted scenario could also be true: as the author conspiratorially shares the tunnel's secret with the reader, now both must adhere to the Aghori Baba's advice. In this case, the reading of the text would assume the same status as actually undertaking the journey, and so the initiated reader gains some share in the Goddess's *darśan*.

A second approach to this passage is through the concept of the "witnessing-I's" perspective. This implies the connection between the I-narrator and the author of the book discussed above—a link particularly interesting for the Goddess's devotees and the story's claim to authenticity. From this angle, the scene constitutes a significant break from the "autobiographical pact." The I-narrator supplies the reader with an account of what happened, ignoring the explicit advice—and even the warning—provided by the undisputed ritual authority of the whole story, the Aghori Baba. At this moment, the paradoxical role of associating author and narrator becomes, once more, evident: by informing the reader of the *darśan*, the undisputed *raison d'être* of the whole story, the pilgrimage is valued as something that can indeed bring about a direct encounter with the divine, thus legitimizing the physically and mentally grueling journey. Yet by ignoring the Aghori Baba's advice, the credibility of the narrator—and hence the "autobiographical pact," meaning the association between author and narrator—is placed in jeopardy; the witnessing-I either does not respect the rules set out by the Aghori Baba or, more significantly, does not fear the Goddess's potential wrath and hence is not a good devotee. This contradiction undermines the notion of the witnessing-I.

Today, Abadhut's story is almost forgotten in Pakistan, and only a few people have heard of the film. In India, however, the account is well known not only among Hinglaj devotees. The impression I have from devotees in both countries is that the work is often judged according to a certain standard of accuracy due to which the strong narrativization of the account appears obstructive and seen as a sign of "mere storytelling." Thus, by comparison to Shastri's work, introduced below, it seems that for many, *Marutīrtha Hiṃlāj* represents a work of fiction rather than a reliable account of the pilgrimage.

3.6.2 *Āgneya Tīrtha Hiṅglāj—The Blazing Pilgrimage to Hinglaj*

Certainly one of the most influential texts about the Goddess Hinglaj composed in Hindi is the travelogue *Āgneya Tīrtha Hiṅglāj* (*The Fiery Pilgrimage to Hinglaj*), written by Devadatta Shastri and published in 1977. Aside from accounts by British officers from the nineteenth century, this text is one of the most extensive travelogues available today. For many devotees in India and Pakistan, the narrative presents an accurate account of the "authentic" or "traditional" *yātrā* (mainly due to its descriptive style), and thus people frequently refer to the text. To my knowledge, there has not been an open discussion regarding the relationship of "fiction" and "facts" in this account. I understand the text not only as a valuable report about the rituals and routes in the 1940s but also as an important component in the creation of a Hinglaj discourse. *Āgneya Tīrtha Hiṅglāj*, therefore, not only is a product of but also produces discourses on the desert Goddess.

An example from my fieldwork demonstrates this. On my last visit to Rajasthan in fall 2011, I gave Shastri's book to one of my most valuable informants in India at that time, Rajendra Singh, a Maru Caran who is introduced in detail in Chapter 4. In one of our conversations, I offered to share my collection of Hindi material on Hinglaj with him, which he happily accepted. Rajendra's ears pricked up in particular when I mentioned Devadatta Shastri's book, and he made me promise to give him the book as soon as possible. At that time, we were preparing to go to Deshnok, where an annual circumambulation (Hin. *parikramā*) around the temple of the Goddess Karni was taking place and where many Charans usually come together. Rajendra was fascinated by the account, its writing style, and the details, and he repeatedly mentioned the veracity of the book. Later that night, when Rajendra and I were walking through the Rajasthani desert circling the temple, our conversation revolved around different modes and aspects of the *yātrā*. I asked Rajendra about his opinion on the difference of walking and traveling in a vehicle. In his answer, Rajendra compared the pilgrimage to Hinglaj from the older days with now, and he offered large parts of Shastri's description to make his point clear. Other questions I asked were also often answered with details and events from the book I had given him just a few hours ago.

Together with the already introduced Bengali novel *Marutīrtha Hiṃlāj* and its filmic version from 1959, this text also hugely contributed to making the story of the pilgrimage available to a wider public. These works helped to cast Hinglaj into popular culture and contributed to the sedimented image of the pilgrimage as extremely arduous. They must be taken seriously in considering

the sources of what is, at least in India (and also in parts of Pakistan), the dominant image of the Hinglaj pilgrimage. In the following text, I will present the core story of the pilgrimage found in Shastri, supplemented with comparisons to parts from Abadhut's account provided in the footnotes.

Āgneya Tīrtha Hiṅglāj is also written in a first-person narrative, and Shastri claims to have gone on the pilgrimage himself in 1940 (Shastri 1977, 6). Also, here an association between the narrating-I and the author is quickly established, leading to the impression of reading the report of a witness. Shastri's account begins with the following sentences:

> From the Himalaya to Kanyakumari and from Kamakhya to Hinglaj—the understanding I received from traveling to these four corners of the country, the life experience I gained from seeing the country, shaped my personality. (Shastri 1977, Foreword)

In this first sentence of his book, Shastri portrays himself as a wanderer with a specific relationship to Hinglaj and to India, which is "framed" by these holy places. For him, it is the experience along the way, rather than the events at the final location, that stands at the center of his motivation, a theme that commonly recurs throughout the narrative. This focus is also conspicuous in the proportion of his story dedicated to discussing the entire journey, whereas by contrast, only the final four pages of the text describe events at Hinglaj. His "life experience" (*jīvan darśan*) also distinguishes him from his fellow pilgrims, another theme present throughout the story. Shastri mentions that at the time when he did the *yātrā*, it was still considered mere luck for one to reach home safely.[29] He claims that the difficulty and the fearsomeness of the journey was the most attractive point for him, more appealing than the proclaimed wonders and miracles and therefore emphasizes the kinesthetic part of the pilgrimage.[30] These introductory words set the tone early on for his approach to the *tīrthayātrā* and its pilgrims. The protagonist engages in a kind of participatory observation of the pilgrimage and often distances himself from the scenes and the other members of his group. Shastri portrays himself as an enlightened traveler who often reveals the superstitious and irrational behaviors of his fellow travelers to the reader. The protagonist thus speaks to a presumably similarly enlightened reader, whom he deems

29. ". . . *sahī-salāmat vāpas ājānā baṛe bhāgya kī bāt mānī jātī thī*" (Shastri 1977, Foreword).

30. "*Durgam path kī vibhīṣikā ne jit'nā mujhe ākṛṣṭ kiyā thā, ut'nā camatkāroṃ aur kutūhaloṃ ne nahīṃ*" (Shastri 1977, 6).

spiritual but not set on caste or ritualistic ideologies. The following briefly summarizes the narrative.

In 1940, on the way back from Kashmir to central India, the self-proclaimed wanderer Shastri meets a member of the Nath sect in Lahore who instructs him at length about the mysteries and the difficulties of the pilgrimage to Hinglaj. It is precisely this intimidating nature of the daunting path to the Goddess's shrine that intrigues Shastri. He decides to go to Karachi, where pilgrims meet at the Nagnath *akhāṛā*, a place for Nath ascetics to organize camels and to wait for a group of twenty to twenty-five people to gather. The pilgrim group is then led by the *aguā* (Hin. leader, guide), or the *chaṛīdār* (Hin. stick bearer), the spiritual head of the journey, traditionally belonging to the Nagnath clan (Shastri 1977, 4). Every year, the responsibility for guiding the pilgrims through the desert and orchestrating the ritual performances is assumed by a different man from one of the Nagnath families (Shastri 1977, 4). These *aguās* also carry the *chaṛī*, a bar in the shape of a *triśūla* (Skt. trident), taken from the Hinglaj Valley and wrapped in yellow, ochre, and red cloth (Shastri 1977, 5). This *chaṛī* is a symbol for the Goddess and plays a central role during the ritual journey.[31] So, for example, it is not allowed to travel in front of the one who carries it (*chaṛīdār*). The same is true even during the stops along the way at each *paṛāv* (Hin. holding place, camping ground), where the *chaṛīdār* sticks it in the earth. This indicates the point beyond which no one is allowed to go in the direction of the pilgrimage route. In addition, the *chaṛī* must be worshipped and honored by all the pilgrims.

At the Nagnath *akhāṛā* in Karachi, Shastri is told that he will have to wait for at least another month for enough people to gather and for the cameleers to arrive. So, he uses the time to go to Sadh Bela, a *tīrtha,* as he is told, in the city of Sukkur on an island in the River Indus. There the *mahaṃt* (Hin. superior of a monastery, abbot) of Sadh Bela grows very fond of Shastri and provides him with supplies and advice for his pilgrimage. The abbot instructs him to keep many onions in case of a drinking-water shortage; he advises that the onion's juice would help stave off nausea and dizziness as well as provide liquid (Shastri 1977, 8).[32]

Back in Karachi, Shastri finds that twenty-seven pilgrims have gathered at the Nagnath *akhāṛā* and are ready to begin their journey. Among them is a Gujarati couple, Jayaben and Jivraj (Shastri 1977, 9), who are undertaking the

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31. "*Chaṛī kā bhī viśeṣ mahattva aur svarūp, hotā hai*" (Shastri 1977, 5). Cf. Abadhut (1964, 5–6).

32. Abadhut (1964, 79).

pilgrimage in hopes of having an offspring with the blessing of Hinglaj. The Gujarati woman is the only female pilgrim in the party (Shastri 1977, 9).

The group begins their journey and makes their first rest stop at the River Hab, on the periphery of Karachi, where the *chaṛīdār* puts the stick into the ground and smokes a *cilam* (Hin. clay pipe) to appease the God Shiva (Shastri 1977, 11). The next morning the ritual journey begins with an oath by each of the pilgrims: Until they return once more to this river following the pilgrimage, they will not engage in any sexual activities; they will help each other; they will avoid thoughts of envy, hate, or blame; and under no circumstances will they let anyone drink from their own water jar (Hin. *surāhī*). The oath is accompanied by the tying of an ochre-colored piece of cloth around the head of each pilgrim (Shastri 1977, 11).

With this pledge, the pilgrims begin their journey into the desert, where the path is thorny and difficult.[33] To find the proper route, the pilgrims must depend on the intuition of the camels, who play an important role as navigators.[34] The camel guiders are able to find the way at night according to the position of the stars, but during the day the animals' sense of orientation is vital for finding the way and locating sources of necessary drinking water (Shastri 1977, 12). For this service every pilgrim is bound to give one *roṭī* (Hin. bread) a day to the camel drivers. Pilgrims are also obliged to give one *roṭī* to those people who safeguard the drinking water in this barren environment (Shastri 1977, 14).[35]

After a few days of this extremely demanding journey through the desert, the Gujarati couple, Jayaben and Jivraj, find themselves in trouble. Jayaben is becoming increasingly fatigued and since her water is also finished, Shastri gives her some of his onions. When Jivraj sees his wife taking the onions, he hits her and yells that she must not spoil her *dharma* (Shastri 1977, 17). Jivraj explains that they are from the Pushtimarg Vaishnava sect, which does not allow the consumption of onions. When Jayaben eventually loses consciousness, Shastri urges Jivraj to give her some of his water. Jivraj refuses on the grounds of his oath. An argument breaks out in which Shastri maintains that without his wife, Jivraj's *yātrā* is finished since there will be no one to bear him a son. But Jivaraj's company also insists on the oath. Annoyed by the stubbornness of his fellow pilgrims, Shastri takes out his own water and gives Jayaben

33. "*Nīce ret ūpar kāṁṭedār jhāṛiyāṁ, ūṁcī-nīcī zamīn, kabhī ṭīle, kabhī ṭībe, ṭeṛhā-meṛhā rāstā kaṁṭoṃ se bharā thā*" (Shastri 1977, 12).

34. Abadhut (1964, 16).

35. Abadhut (1964, 12).

some to drink. Upon this intervention, the woman regains consciousness and can then proceed with her journey. By this act, Shastri breaks his promise at the beginning of the journey but saves the life of the young woman. Despised by his fellow pilgrims for this, he comments on the situation with the words, "I fully emptied my bottle and broke my cruel oath."[36]

On the next day, when there is still no fresh drinking water in sight, all of the Gujarati Vaishnavas start to leave their sectarian constraints aside and ask Shastri for onions, too. This leads the protagonist into a long critique on communalism and religious groups. Shastri argues that the reality of the *dharma* can't be bound by the limitations of communalism.[37] The *saṃpradāy* (Hin. established doctrine) for him is merely a system of useless laws and rites, whereas only the *Gītā* offers solutions for the real predicaments of human beings and thus provides an explanation of *dharma* (Shastri 1977, 20).

In Sonmiani (Hin. *śoṇ'veṇī*), a coastal town in Las Bela district, the *yātrīs* register their names and pay the pilgrimage tax after which they proceed with their journey westward in the direction of the mud volcano Chandrakup. At this point, the *chaṛīdār* announces that "the beginning of the real pilgrimage"[38] has now come and that there is an important place ahead where the group will stop for *pūjā*.[39] After climbing a mountain, the group finds a spot where two stones are erected for worship. The *aguā* explains: "A long time ago, a guru undertook this journey with his student. The master became parched and so he asked his student for water. Because the student was a *guru-bhakta*, a devout follower of the master, he gave all of his drinking water away until there was none left for himself. When the student collapsed from dehydration, he begged his master for water, but the guru did not share his drinking water with the dying boy. The student took his last breath at this spot. Alone in the desert, the guru became afraid and let his water bottle slip out of his hand. It shattered into pieces on the ground, spilling all the water into the sand. Eventually, the guru also died in the heat, and it is said that he collapsed right next to his loyal student. Since that time, these two stones have been worshipped in

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36. ". . . *maiṃ ne surāhī khālī kar dī aur ap'nī krūr śapath ko bhaṅg kar diyā*" (Shastri 1977, 18). A similar theme is also found in Abadhut's novel. There, it is Bhairavi, a female pilgrim, who gives drinking water from her bottle to Kunti, a woman found in the desert in an unconscious state. However, there, the incident does not have such a strong ethical implication (Abadhut 1964, 20).

37. "*Dharmatattva sampradāyoṃ kī sīmā se baṁdhā nahīṃ hotā hai*" (Shastri 1977, 20).

38. ". . . *tīrtha-yātrā kā vāstavik prārambh* . . ." (Shastri 1977, 23).

39. In Abdhut's account, this place is also described as the first *darśan* of the journey ("*yahī ham logoṃ ke pratham darśan the*") (Abadhut 1964, 55).

memory of this incident." Shocked by this story, some of the pilgrims again swear never to share their water with anyone (Shastri 1977, 25).[40]

From there, the westbound path toward Chandrakup proceeds mostly according to the location of wells in the area.[41] At one of these drinking-water wells, the starving guard demands not just one *roṭī* from the pilgrims, according to the tradition, but insists on having two from each of them (Shastri 1977, 26). The pilgrims refuse and leave the hungry man behind. Sometime later, the group is surprised by a sandstorm, and two pilgrims—one from Rajasthan and one from Gujarat—disappear. After the storm settles, the group attempts to find them, but their search and the hope of finding them alive is in vain; eventually, they discover their dead bodies (Shastri 1977, 30). Triggered by the death of the two *yātrīs*, Shastri begins to reflect on the impact of the pilgrimage and contemplates the secrets of life and death. He concludes that the journey had somehow cast a different light on these mysteries; he even claims that through this voyage, "we understood the root of life."[42]

Later along the way, while searching for wood at another well, Jivraj finds the dead body of a watchman who had starved there some days before. The discovery affects all the pilgrims deeply, and, according to tradition, they put some flour on the watchman's dead body and leave. Shastri asks them to help him bury the corpse, but no one is willing to do so. The pilgrims are afraid of becoming impure by touching the body of a dead Muslim. In the end, only Shastri and the two Muslim cameleers stay and bury the corpse in the desert (Shastri 1977, 34).

Several kilometers later, the group arrives at the Chandrakup mud volcano. The *aguā* gathers the pilgrims around the *chaṛī* and orders them to fast and to stay awake through the night for the preparation of the *roṭ*, a special kind of cake that will be offered to Chandrakup the next day. He also instructs them in detail about how the upcoming rituals will be performed. Once at the top and at the rim of the crater, the pilgrims must admit their sins, after which they should throw their offerings into the volcano. Before yelling out their sins, every pilgrim must state his or her name, caste, and village, as well as his or her father's, grandfather's, and great-grandfather's names (Shastri 1977, 42). The offerings consist of *gāṁjā* (Hin. marijuana), coconuts, and *cilams*. The *aguā* advises the pilgrims that the offerings of those who are righteous, or of

40. A similar story is also found in Abadhut (Abadhut 1964, 56).

41. "*Gantavya vahī hai, jahāṁ kuāṁ mil jāye*" (Shastri 1977, 25). Hart also mentions that the route followed the location of the wells (Hart 1839, 81).

42. ". . . *ham ne jīvan kā mūlya sam'jhā*" (Shastri 1977, 31f.).

those who confess all their sins, will be accepted, and their offerings will sink immediately into the mud. But the contributions of the evildoers who do not confess will not sink down into the volcano, and the bubbling of the mud will stop. Such people will have stones thrown at them and then be sent away.[43]

The next day, on the top of Chandrakup, the *chaṛīdār* performs the *pūjā* and tells the pilgrims to come forward one by one. When the time comes for a devotee from Barmer to make his offering, the bubbles and the wind suddenly stop, and his gifts do not submerge in the volcano's mud. Only after he yells out his sins is his offering accepted and sinks down into the mud (Shastri 1977, 45). While standing at the rim of the volcano, another pilgrim from Gujarat becomes possessed by a spirit. As he speaks, the man's voice changes to that of a female. The female ghost blames the pilgrim for having taken her virginity and then murdering her afterward. In revenge for his acts, the *jinn* announces that she will now kill the Gujarati man by throwing him into the volcano. But the *chaṛīdār* manages to cast out the spirit with mantras and some of the volcano's mud, which he smears on the man's forehead. After the pilgrim confesses to this sin, Chandrakup also accepts the offerings of the sinner, and all of his oblations submerge into the volcano.

When it is Shastri's turn to confess his sins before Chandrakup, the writer instead presents a monologue expounding on the predicaments presented by the concepts of good and evil. At the conclusion of his speech on the difficulty of acting morally, a huge eruption spews from the volcano, spitting out two coconuts. Pleased, the *chaṛīdār* taps Shastri on the shoulder and explains this strange incident to him as a sign of Chandrakup's deep satisfaction with Shastri's words (Shastri 1977, 47).

After another five days, the pilgrims reach a village just before the River Hingol. Because of the difficult terrain, the group is forced to leave the camels behind and take only the things necessary for the *pūjā*. At the shore of the Hingol River, the *chaṛīdār* instructs the group to break off two *nīm* (Lat. *Azadirachta indica*) twigs from the nearby bushes. One they use to clean their teeth before crossing the river, and the other must be planted there at the shore. They then take a bath in the river, where they meet an ascetic called Aghori Baba who had been the head of the Nagnath *akhāṛā* in Karachi many years before (Shastri 1977, 51). As a young man, he had accompanied a group of pilgrims to Hinglaj, but when they prepared for their return journey, he had decided to stay in the valley to serve the Goddess. Following the order of the Goddess, Aghori Baba had stayed behind, equipped only with a *cilam*

43. ". . . *pahāṛ se ḍhelā mārkar bhagā diyā jāyegā*" (Shastri 1977, 42).

and some *gāṁjā*. The pilgrims give the old mendicant some *dān-dakṣiṇā* (Hin. gifted food) and proceed to the cave of the Devi.

After crossing the river, they finally reach the valley of Hinglaj. But the group must wait for one more day because, according to tradition, they are forbidden to cross the stream toward the cave during the day (Shastri 1977, 53). The *aguā* plants the *chaṛī* in the ground and orders the pilgrims to fast. On the next morning, they take a bath, put on fresh clothes, and cross the stream. When they reach the *sanctum sanctorum*, the author describes a cave around fifty feet high containing a *vedī* (Hin. a place for sacrifices). On the *vedī* a lamp is burning. The *chaṛīdār* spreads all the offerings on the *vedī* and starts the *pūjā*. After that, the pilgrims are ready for the *darśan* of the Goddess, for which they crawl on all fours through a small door on one side of the *vedī* leading to a tunnel into the mountain. The semicircular tunnel leads to another door on the other side of the platform. Shastri goes inside but writes nothing in his account about the "indescribable" experience.[44] When Shastri exits the tunnel, Aghori Baba, who had followed them, garlands him with a *mālā* from the *vedī*, and the ritual is complete. Before the pilgrims begin their return journey, the Aghori Baba shows them the signs of the sun and moon inscribed on the mountains opposite the temple and explains that these were created by Ramachandra himself when he came to Hinglaj to cleanse himself of his sin of killing a Brahmin. The narrative ends with the *darśan* at Akashganga, another *tīrtha* near Hinglaj.

As mentioned above, there is no distinct line between the author and the protagonist/narrating-I in this account. This line is kept as malleable as possible throughout, since the identification of the narrating-I with the author stands for the uniqueness and authenticity of the story. This approach creates a mood within the travelogue, which is focused on the witnessing-I who in turn perpetuates a certain kind of moral standard, especially in relation to ritual journeys or pilgrimages.

One of the most interesting aspects of Shastri's narration is the tension between the narrator's "genuine" spirituality and the useless, "cruel" (Hin. *krūr*) rituals (Shastri 1977, 18) involved in the journey. The author positions the protagonist at an interestingly thin line. On the one side, he paints a picture of himself as a spiritual seeker deeply rooted in the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, a character who believes in the agency of volcanoes and does not question the presence of spirits. On the other side, though, he is a fierce agitator against blind faith, orthodoxy, and traditional interpretations of the

44. *"Anirvacanīy yah anubhav!"* (Shastri 1977, 54).

classical Hindu scriptures (Shastri 1977, 20). This friction is an intriguing aspect of the story contributing to the protagonist's complexity above and beyond his shallow "heroization" in the story. It is not his devotion to the Goddess that makes the protagonist the *primus inter pares* in the pilgrimage group as is so often the case in plots found in oral traditions. It is rather his practice of *ātmaviśvās* (Hin.), his self-confidence, that allows him to reach a level of spiritual insight that is not shared by his fellow travelers. While his companions are stuck in their empty, superficial rituals, the protagonist engages with the ground reality of the journey. He learns from the desert and from the noble and simple camel guiders; an exoticization of the noble Balochi cameleers is found in both accounts (cf. Shastri [1977, 10] and Abadhut [1964, 4]). He is independent, humble, and clever, while his fellow pilgrims are bound to their caste and behave in a necessarily segregating and inhumane manner. This contrast is captured in the episode where the protagonist breaks his "cruel oath" and saves the life of the young woman, who is left to die by her stubborn husband and his fellow travelers. This early incident sets the tone for the basic message of the story: the protagonist is rational, individualist, and a humble follower of a spiritual truth. He is able to accept a transcendental reality and soberly engages with it. The narrator even communicates with the Chandrakup volcano, presenting his own sophisticated, almost Nietzschean reflections on the predicament of good and evil. While all the others are passive sinner-subjects of the volcano's agency, the protagonist is active, even receiving the volcano's approval for his words. This scene elevates the protagonist above the other pilgrims. He reaches a level where his insights into the world's secrets are equal to those of gods and spirits. The other pilgrims, by contrast, simply follow a blind, superstitious faith.

Such a portrayal also has an impact on the representation of the *yātrā*. Through the experience, the protagonist develops an ambivalent attitude toward the pilgrimage itself. He sees it as a ritualistic journey of worshipping sticks and stones but also a means to understand the roots of life and to communicate with gods and goddesses. This gap between extremes allows the pilgrimage to become the unknown—a mystical journey that can be filled with the fantasy of the reader. This mystical aspect finds its climax in the final *darśan* at the shrine, an event far from any known worldly experience and thus indescribable. The protagonist's endless doubts about the useless rituals and cruel oaths lead to a *unio mystica* which, in my opinion, appears even more "genuine" because it happens to a skeptic, an event that even the rationally inclined can believe in. Thus, the *yātrā* emerges as a mystical experience for all; it has meaning not only for those stuck in blind faith—that

is, people who believe in purity and rituals—but also for those who follow humanist principles.

3.6.2.1 A Comparative Analysis

Both novels, *Marutīrtha Hiṃlāj* and *Āgneya Tīrtha Hiṅglāj*, exert strong influence on public perception of the ritual journey and form, undoubtedly a significant part of the Hinglaj discourse. Even though the 1955 Bengali work is not commonly known among devotees outside the Bengali-speaking area, the story of renouncement and lost love became famous due to its 1959 film adaptation. Notwithstanding the work's 1957 translation into Hindi, it seems that Shastrī's later text has had more influence among many (Hindi-reading) worshippers of Hinglaj today and is often portrayed as a more "authentic" depiction of the ritual journey than the Bengali travelogue cum romance novel and its subsequent film adaptation (Ratnu 2007, 8). This might have to do with the difference in style. While Abadhut ascribes more to a multilayer narrative style with small interpolated anecdotes and even a story of impossible love, Shastrī's one-dimensional approach to the journey's account gives one the impression of reading a report rather than a story. Here, the narrating-I is more easily associable with the author than in the work of Abadhut. Abadhut's story does, however, capture themes of the ritual journey present in the 1940s, which are later rearticulated by Shastri and also found in recent oral narratives at the shrine.

By comparison, it seems as if Shastri must have picked up some of the essential themes from Abadhut's work and built them into his account in a reduced form. Themes such as the carrying of onions, the idea that the camels are the actual guides along the way, or the breaking of the oath given at the River Hab reappear in Shastrī's work. The "general tone" of the story, where an enlightened narrator/protagonist goes on a mystical journey during which he encounters many demonstrations of blind faith, is similar in both stories. Furthermore, both authors use Chandrakup as a central literary *mise en scéne* in which the stories' main characters are dramatically developed.

This coincidence of very closely corresponding themes, when one compares the two stories side by side, might suggest that Shastri copied parts from Abadhut's much earlier work. However, there is no definite proof of such borrowing. The closest similarities in the two stories are found in the description of the oath at the River Hab and the appearance of the Aghori Baba at the shrine of Hinglaj.[45] Yet the similarity could be explained if both

45. Compare here Shastri (1977, 11) with Abadhut (1964, 6), and Shastri (1977, 54) with Abadhut (1964, 211).

aspects of the journey were ritually sedimented by the time of each text, leading to the near-identical experiences of both authors. This, in fact, seems the most likely explanation—that certain themes were commonly present on the pilgrimage and expressed in different fashions by different writers. Since both authors claim to have gone to Hinglaj around the same time (Shastri in 1940 and Abadhut in 1946), it is feasible that both authors had similar experiences on their journeys. It is also true that even without Bengali language skills, Shastri would have been able to read its Hindi translation, which was already available in 1964, more than ten years before his own publication. In addition to this, the motion picture was also already widely known outside the Bengali-speaking area. Thus, the assumption that Abadhut's writing influenced Shastri's work to some degree is likely, but the idea that Shastri copied his description directly from Abadhut's is much less so. Notwithstanding the fact that the mutual influence is an intriguing question, it ultimately does not have an important impact on this study. I am interested in the various ways the *yātrā* was represented and how certain common themes arose that eventually sedimented into an allegedly "true" pilgrimage—or, in other words, into one of the tradition's most conspicuous truth-claims. Both texts, in different languages and in different geographical areas, together with the film, form part of the discourse on Hinglaj, and their role in generating a certain idea of the pilgrimage cannot be underestimated.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the dynamics of the ritual journeys to and around the shrine of Hinglaj Devi. From the sources available, it is evident that an elaborate pilgrimage system to the shrine has existed at least since the fourteenth century. Even though the scarcity of the material does not allow for detailed understanding of many particularities en route before the nineteenth century, it is likely that the *yātrā* played an important role for many Sindhis and Hindu communities long before the colonial period. Representations of the pilgrimage, such as the travelogue by Abadhut, the account given by Shastri, and the mytho-historic narrative of Rama, emphasize the necessity of austerity and kinesthetic practice, captured by the concept of *tapas* or *tapasyā*, along the way. Notwithstanding the fact that there existed a sea route to Hinglaj, not much has been passed down concerning this mode of transportation. Most accounts found today instead discuss the walking practice, emphasizing its danger and difficulties.

4

(Un)necessary Hardships in "Getting There"

4.1 Introduction

As suggested in Chapter 3, much has changed for the desert shrine in the past few decades. With the institutionalization of the pilgrimage by the HSM (Hinglaj Sheva Mandali) and its connection to urban Pakistan through the construction of the Makran Coastal Highway (MCH), many ritual practices were revisited and ultimately interpreted anew. While in the preceding chapter I presented the main accounts that speak about the "traditional" *yātrā* and its associated rituals, here I will focus on how the pilgrimage and its practices have been reinterpreted following the recent changes. Building on my interaction with pilgrims in Pakistan and India, I will show how certain "traditional" elements have been rearticulated to fit the novel circumstances.

The journey's kinesthetic experience, for example, has been significantly changed by the construction of the MCH, which shaped a new pilgrimage route and created new rituals and patterns of mobility. On the one hand, the practice of walking to the temple has notably diminished because of bus and tour operators. On the other hand, however, there are still pilgrim groups that, instead of taking a vehicle choose to travel on foot from their hometowns to the Balochistan site, often covering hundreds of kilometers. Their path no longer cuts through the arid desert but simply leads along the highway almost directly up to the shrine. This route has proven advantageous as it eliminates two of the main problems that pilgrims once faced on the traditional route: the possibility of getting lost in the barren desert and the scarcity of water sources. The traffic on the much-traveled MCH triggered the opening of little stalls and petrol pumps that sell water and snacks on the side of the road. Not infrequently, cars also stop to offer the walkers drinking water. With this development, certain themes found on the traditional pilgrimages

were newly articulated and appropriated for the different ways of walking. I will present several case studies of such rearticulated ritual journeys.

In addition to the changes in modes of transportation inside Pakistan, I will present discourses on the transnational ritual journey performed by devotees crossing the border from India. With the assistance of travelogues, fieldwork among Charan devotees in Rajasthan, and the case study of a pilgrimage group coming from Gujarat, I will show that the journey's salvific potential for Indian devotees is best understood from the perspectives of power, "symbolic capital" (Bourdieu 1998), and restricted mobility.

In the last part of this chapter, I will again turn my attention to the situation in Pakistan, addressing the impact of these new patterns of mobility—tantamount to the increased accessibility of Hinglaj—on common religious conceptions among visitors today. How do Hindus at the shrine cope with the gap between traditional representations of the pilgrimage and current practices at Hinglaj? What kinds of new narratives are created to explain the change in ways of getting there? A discussion of these and similar questions comprise the final part of this chapter.

4.2 The Renaissance of the Walking Practice

Maiyājī tere dar'bār par ham āye svāmī ban kar	Mother we came to your court as mendicants
Maiyājī tere dar'bār par ham āye yogī ban kar	Mother we came to your court as Yogis
De de re! De de re! De de re maiyā! Sab kī jholī bhar kar	Give, give oh Mother, fill everybody's bag
Tere sac dhām maiyā āve duniyā sārī	May the whole world come to your true abode
Ādikāverī, Āmbegaurī, tu hai Mahākālī	Oh Adikaveri, oh Ambegauri, you are Mahakali!
Sab ke dil ke dhaṛ'koṃ par rāj kar'nevālī	You who rules everybody's heartbeat
Ādikāverī, Āmbegaurī, tu hai Śerāvālī	Oh Adikaveri, oh Ambegauri, you are Sheravali!
Rāmcandra rahīm tere guṇ hameśā gāyeṃ	May Ramacandra and Rahim always praise your virtues
It'nī śakti de jo maiyā kār'vāṁ baṛhāye	Mother give us enough strength to move on in this caravan
De de re! De de re! Maiyā sab kī jholī bhar kar	Give, give oh Mother, fill up everybody's bag

(Song sung by Sindhi pilgrims on their way to Hinglaj, 2012)

The practice of walking to the shrine underwent a revival in the past decade as a result of the construction of the MCH. Vernacular and colonial reports confirm that the journey was well frequented before Partition, a practice that, as locals confirm, apparently lasted until the 1965 war. However, there appears to have been a period of stagnancy from around the mid-1960s until the mid-1980s—a time when the shrine was scarcely visited. Today, several groups have again begun walking to Hinglaj, and it is evident that the road served as an incentive for many to forgo the comfortable bus ride to Hinglaj and instead opt for walking to the shrine. The following are a few case studies of those who willingly chose to walk to the shrine starting from different places in Pakistan. Pilgrims' motivations behind this practice are diverse but frequently involve the fulfillment of wishes, certain vows, or, simply, wanderlust. It is evident, however, that most people do not follow old family traditions when walking to Hinglaj but instead have only recently decided to go on the tour. Shridevi, a middle-aged woman who traveled with a group of fifteen to twenty people from a village near Umerkot in Sindh, covering around 600 kilometers during her walk, described her decision to walk to Hinglaj instead of taking the bus:

> We are coming now for the second time. The first time we came by bus, but now we all decided to walk. We all decided this together. This is my neighborhood, these are the people from my village, so I also came.

Shridevi, whom I met in April 2012, only a few kilometers away from the entry to the Hingol National Park, was walking together with her mother who was in her mid-60s. When I met them, the group had been walking for over three weeks (see Fig. 4.1). Shridevi had no particular incentive for the journey, but she repeatedly emphasized the joy she and the other members of the group were feeling while walking.

By contrast, Giresh, another pilgrim from the same party, was in his early 30s and had joined the walking tour in gratitude for a wish he had been granted by the Goddess. He explained:

> This is our service [*sevā*] to the Goddess. I came because I asked for something. I came since I wanted my sister to have a child. I had already come twice, once on a bus and then on a motorbike, but my Mother told me that I must come on foot. Then [the Goddess] heard my wish and my sister had a child. This is why I am now walking to her shrine.

FIGURE 4.1 Shridevi with other pilgrims on the way to Hinglaj, April 2012

The desire for offspring is a topic frequently found among pilgrims walking to Hinglaj. This is certainly not particular to Hinglaj but is rather found at many sacred sites all over South Asia. In Giresh's case, the kinesthetic aspect of the *yātrā* was the carrier for the journey's salvific powers. Even though Giresh had visited the shrine several times, in his experience, only the promise of walking to the abode of the Goddess ultimately proved powerful enough to help his sister receive offspring.

Although people walk to the shrine throughout the year, most pilgrimage groups choose to set out in April, just before the big *melā* (Hin. festival) that falls in the month of *phālgun* or *caitra* in the Hindu calendar so that they can reach the valley in time for the festival activities. This was the case for another group I met, this time already inside the Hinglaj Valley. They had come from rural areas around Hyderabad and consisted of fifteen to twenty male peasants hailing mostly from the Kohli community. For some of the men, this was their fifth visit to the shrine, but on previous trips, they had always taken the bus.

In Sindh, the Kohli community is mainly a disempowered scheduled caste whose members work as agricultural peasants on the fields owned by Sindh's feudal elite. The Kohlis, together with other scheduled castes,

such as the Meghvar or the Bhil, form the biggest part of the visitors at the Hinglaj festival, which also reflects the overall population of Hindus in Sindh, and more than 90 percent originate from these communities. This class and caste division is also tangible in the organization of the festival, where a part of the upper-class Lohana community, embodied in the HSM, has taken on the responsibility to "educate" the low caste visitors. Such measures, however, often lead to sneers and tension between the castes, who mutually deny each other's ability to know the "real" tradition. The HSM's attempt to hegemonize the field of interpretation and to solidify their own tradition at the shrine will be discussed in a later chapter. Traces of this relationship, however, become already conspicuous in the following case study.

The Kohli pilgrims were led by Putu, a man of around age 50 who had assembled the group from members of his and other nearby villages. He came to Hinglaj for the first time in 1997 and was proud to tell me that his father had visited the shrine in 1992. Even though Putu was the one who usually spoke for the group, there was no definite guide on the *yātrā*, and the men did not seem to be familiar with the concept of the *chaṛīdār*. Since many had come by bus before, it was not a problem for them to find the right way. Now, as peregrinating pilgrims, they simply followed the road to reach the shrine. The group started their daily walk at around 2:00 a.m. and kept going until noon, when the heat became too difficult for them to bear. On the way, they stayed at temples or private houses and also in the courtyards of mosques where people often supplied them with food and water. When I asked about their incentives for walking to Hinglaj, Putu said:

> We come here to get rid of the sins that we have committed. You know this is our Hajj. This is a real [*haqīqī*] place. Here we can ask the Mother to forgive us [*māf kar'nā*] and beg her to make our families happy. Long ago Shah Abdul Latif also came here with a group of Yogis. He came here to ask the Mother to help him. See, we are also Yogis when we come here. Those who want something from the Mother are all called Yogis or *saṃnyāsīs*.

When asked about the *yātrā's* consequences for the pilgrims' everyday life at home, Putu further explained:

> There won't be any huge changes in our lives after this journey, but people do treat us with some respect. They say: "Hey, you came from Hinglaj. You did your Hajj!" and so on. They respect us [*izzat mil'tī hai*].

> They come and welcome us. They invite us for meals. They ask us what happened on the way—these kinds of things.

The association of the Hinglaj pilgrimage with the Hajj is frequently heard at the shrine. The phrase "this is our *hajj*" ("*yah hajj hai hamārā*") is by far the most common answer to the question about why people have the incentive to travel (whether they drive or walk) to the shrine. This comparison, however, does not seem to relate to the mandatory aspect of the Hajj for devout Muslims but rather to its quality of redemption and cleansing of sins. In addition, the epithet "Hinglaji," equivalent to the title "Hajji," is bestowed upon people who have successfully accomplished the journey. Today, however, this title is mainly found in India, where it still possesses a degree of aura and "symbolic capital" (Bourdieu 1998, 47–52). In Pakistan, due to the easy accessibility of the shrine, the epithet has lost its value and is rarely used. However, because the Hajj is one of the most prominent forms of pilgrimage in Pakistan's public sphere, often mentioned, for example, in schoolbooks and television programs, the frequent comparative references to it are not surprising.

Putu also had much to say about the difference between those who walk to Hinglaj and those who travel by car or bus. Here the gap between historical representations of the pilgrimage and current pilgrimage practices is clearly visible. For Putu, the walking practice is like a *satsaṃg* (Hin. congregation to sing devotional songs; a gathering of those seeking the truth), lifting up the hearts of the pilgrims. Since the Sindhi poet Latif also walked to Hinglaj, Putu saw it as his duty (Hin. *farz*) to go on this pilgrimage. He describes the difference between the modes of travel:

> We will remember the things that we see on this journey our whole lives. The walking is also a place to meet [*mi'lne kī jagah hai*]. People get much more when they walk. This is our *satsaṃg*. The heart becomes happy, and all the things we see on this journey make us happy. Those who sit in their cars are actually trapped in them [*gāṛī meṃ baṃd haiṃ*]. We all help each other. We have the chance to serve each other [*sevā kar'nā*]. Those who sit in their cars do everything only on their own. We see people working in the fields [*zamīn kā work dekh'te haiṃ*], we see different things, and many people who are all different. Here the language is one way, there the language is another way.

Aside from expressing this interest in adventure and new experiences, Putu also used this opportunity to sneer at the Lohanas, the wealthier

merchant Hindu community who, according to him, do not walk but come in their cars:

> See, the Lohanas come in their cars because they are not strong—they are too fat for walking! We work in the fields all day so we are strong, we are able to go on this journey, but they are too weak!

The walking signified a means by which the group defined itself and also undermined a more powerful community. The "fat" Lohanas were not able to go on this difficult pilgrimage; only the strong and hardworking men of the Kohli community, they asserted, were able to endure such an arduous practice. Usually culturally and financially overshadowed by the dominant Lohana Hindu community, the Kohlis I spoke to drew a sense of power and self-confidence from the physical practice. From this perspective, the kinesthetic part of the journey represents strength and distinguishes the Kohlis from the physically weaker upper-caste Hindus.

These pilgrims from the interior of Sindh did not relate to many of the rituals and symbols associated with the "traditional" pilgrimage that was in place before the reinstitutionalization in 1986 and the construction of the MCH in 2001. The group did not have an *aguā* or *chaṛīdār*, nor did they follow the practice of wearing the ochre-colored clothes that are donned by many at the Liari temple. There was no obvious ritual hierarchy, and nobody was designated to lead the group or to speak on its behalf. The group had no stern practice of penance, nor did they follow any particular codes of conduct. They also consumed meat, if they got the chance. The group's whole decorum seemed to be more "fun" oriented. People described their journey as a pleasant experience and did not mention any austerities or difficulties. They came to ask the Goddess for forgiveness at the shrine but did not undertake as necessary any rituals of purification before they reached Hinglaj. For them, it was not necessarily the salvific powers of the walking that were able to rid the pilgrims of their sin. Rather it was the power of the Mother's *garbha* (Hin. womb, lap)—a tunnel underneath the image of Hinglaj that is said to possess purifying qualities (this will be a central theme in the next chapter). For Putu, the experiences on the way and the wanderlust that drove them were at the root of their walking. The people they met en route, the feeling of community, and the adventure in a foreign land were the main characteristics with which they described their journey. This more general overview of modern-day walking pilgrimages will now be supplemented with a more detailed analysis of one particular group.

4.3 The Narayanpur Yātrīs

Narayanpur Colony is a multireligious neighborhood in the center of Karachi, north of Saddar town. It is one of the biggest Hindu colonies in the city, with a few Muslim and Christian families also residing there. The neighborhood is poor and notorious for crime and violence. Most Hindu families hail from Gujarati or Marwari communities, and many work as sweepers for the city of Karachi. Narayanpur is rich in history and houses a variety of temples, gurudwaras, and churches. Within the neighborhood, many different welfare organizations, such as the Maharishi Naval Trust or the more recent Pakistani Hindu Seva Samaj (to be introduced below), try to cater to the needs of the population and often organize festivals or social activities. Over the past years, there has been a significant rise in influence by the ISKCON community, which, with its rejection of caste and open proselytization, has become very popular among the neighborhood's Hindu youth. Narayanpur is densely populated, but its inhabitants frequently display and emphasize a strong communal bond between the families, often transgressing ethnic and religious boundaries.

The practice of walking to the temple of Hinglaj Mata started among the Gujarati community of Narayanpur in 2006 and has since become an annual feature taking place a few days before the April *melā*. I was able to document their journey in 2012 when a group of about twenty-five male pilgrims set out to walk along the Makran Coastal Highway to the valley of the Goddess, among them several youngsters between the ages of 12 and 16 (Schaflechner 2012). Their pilgrimage route does not deviate from the current most popular stops, which arose along with the construction of the MCH and together represent the widely accepted modern pilgrimage route (see Fig. 4.2).

The journey along the road is about 240 kilometers long; the group originally intended to cover the entire distance in six days but ultimately ended up taking twice as long. Some pilgrims also stopped walking due to exhaustion and instead rode on one of the many buses carrying people to the Hinglaj Valley in the days leading up to the *melā*.

At the 2012 pilgrimage, a young man from the group was seriously injured when a motorbike ran into the pilgrim group on the road. The boy was rushed to the Hinglaj Valley on a truck, where the group hoped to find an ambulance that could transport him back to Karachi. They found that there was, in fact, an ambulance stationed in the valley that belonged to the Edhi foundation, a medical care and emergency service. To the group's dismay, however, the doctor on call, a member of the Lohana community, refused to send the vehicle back to Karachi since the boy's condition was not critical. This quickly stirred up a discussion about caste and class differences among many who

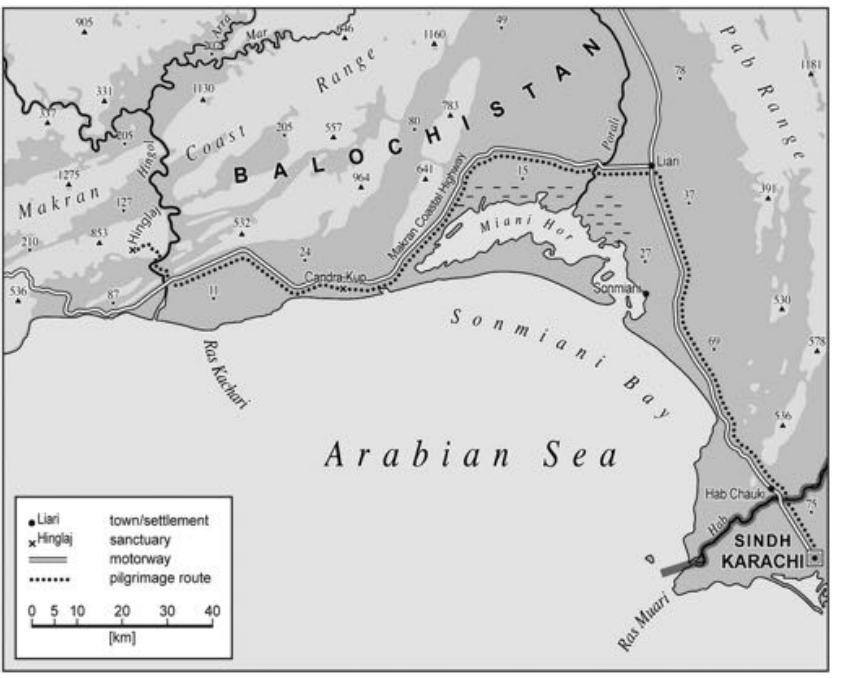

FIGURE 4.2 The route along the Makran Coastal Highway

had witnessed the incident. The doctor's refusal to send the boy to Karachi was interpreted by the Narayanpur Gujarati pilgrimage group as prejudice against their low-caste background. Since the doctor and the majority of members of the temple organization, the HSM, are all from a Lohana background, this refusal was widely understood as a class bias. A private car was found to carry the boy back to the city—but only after the intervention of an influential local member of the Hindu Seva Trust, another Hindu welfare organization based in Karachi. Aside from the class and caste issues it highlighted, this incident also demonstrated the significant lack of medical facilities at the festival and led, in the subsequent weeks, to the establishment of a Gujarati community-driven organization in Narayanpur, the Pakistan Hindu Seva Samaj, which aimed to improve medical services in the valley. When I went back during the *ʿīd* celebrations in the fall of the same year, some members of the Narayanpur pilgrim group proudly showed me their medical supplies and an emergency car they had organized for the transportation of patients (see Chapter 6).

4.3.1 The Route

As mentioned above, the Narayanpur pilgrim group's route follows the MCH and is based primarily on the common bus and car route to the *melā* from

Karachi. Only one stop, Kanda Devi station (Hin. *paṛāv*), a few kilometers after Chandrakup, is unique to the group's route. I have never been to this *paṛāv* myself. However, I was told that the community worships the Mother there in the form of a tree and traditionally it is at this *paṛāv* that the pilgrims choose their *śaraṇ bhāī/bahan*—the partner with whom they will enter the Mother's *garbha*.

In 2012, the pilgrims intended to visit several temples in Karachi, including the Jagnath *akhāṛā*, which, until just a few decades ago was a main gathering spot for Hinglaj pilgrims. (Today, this role has been largely assumed by the Swaminarayan temple on M.A. Jinnah Road.) Due to ongoing gunfire in the area following a police operation to curb gang activity, however, the Gujarati pilgrims were forced to start their journey from the outskirts of Karachi instead. In a later meeting, some pilgrims recounted their dangerous way out of Karachi and proudly added how the power of the Goddess had guided their path through sensitive neighborhoods and how she protected the rather large group from being targeted. Because of this tension, the pilgrims' first *paṛāv* was, therefore, the village of Hab Chawki, usually reached only after visiting several temples in Karachi. From there, the group's path led along the MCH by way of Vindar, a small village on the way, to the next *paṛāv* in Liari where the group stayed at the local Devi temple. They walked from this stop to Chandrakup, where the group "cooled down" the *chaṛī*, the stick held by the group's leader, by immersing it in the volcano. This cooling down of the stick is associated with the heat that is generated in the process of the pilgrimage through bodily and mental exhaustion. Next, via Kanda Devi stop, the community reached the Hingol River, and from there, they went directly into the valley.

The pilgrims' walking practice is loosely modeled on codes of conduct adhered to in previous journeys described by authors such as Shastri (1977) and Hart (1839). Similar to the accounts of these authors, the pilgrim group is guided by one or two *chaṛīdārs* who carry with them a *chaṛī*, a walking stick shaped like Shiva's trident, the *triśūla*. In an interview I conducted before the group set out, the pilgrims said that this role is filled by the most senior member of the walking community and also the man who initiated the annual pilgrimage tradition in the group, Raj Kumar. I was told that Raj, who has been the *aguā* or *xalīfah* (Urd. caliph; here: leader) of the group since 2006, must walk a few hundred meters ahead of the group and is responsible for the community's general well-being. They also reported that Raj Kumar is the pilgrims' representative, accepting donations of food and water given to the group along the way. However, spending some time with the pilgrims as they traveled, it seemed to me that none of these rules was strictly followed. In fact, the first time I met them on the road several kilometers after the village Vindar on the fourth day of the journey, it did not seem to matter who was walking in front and who was walking at the back of

the group. Raj Kumar did not carry the *chaṛī* in his hand, nor was he walking in front of the others. During the time I spent with the community, it seemed that their ritual journey was loosely structured and had no particular ritual hierarchy. It was obvious that the pilgrims had given a very traditional description of their journey to me beforehand, which was, however, not sustained along the way. The only rule that all of the *yātrīs* seemed to follow was that no one consumed any meat or fish on the journey. However, many smoked a substantial amount of *gāṁjā* (Hin. marijuana), which they considered necessary to appease Shiva. The older men in the community also had some whiskey with them, which they drank as the Goddess' *prasād* (Hin. food offered to an idol).

Raj Kumar first initiated the walking practice to Hinglaj among the Narayanpur Gujarati community in 2006. Before this, he walked annually to the *ᶜurs* of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar where, according to his own account, he had gone for eleven subsequent years. Raj frequently went together with members of the Christian and Hindu *paṃcāyat*[1] from his neighborhood. Eventually he stopped going to Sehwan and instead started to go to Hinglaj. His reasons for that are interesting. Initially, he says, he simply had not heard of the shrine. After learning of it in 2004, his decision to actually visit Hinglaj came about as he described in a 2012 interview:

> We set out walking from Liari [on our way to Sehwan Sharif] and kept our luggage on a camel, [and also] *rations* [Engl.], water . . . It was my first year. We went with the Meghwarji—the Meghwarjis from next to our neighborhood. We were five guys. So I thought to myself: "Man, forget Qalandar! Again we are climbing the mountains for Noorani. The Mother's [Hinglaj] road is all straight. It is *by road* [Engl.]." I said: "We have to go this way!" So the Qalandar was out [lit.: died] and I left from there [to Hinglaj].[2]

This story demonstrates the importance of the MCH's construction to the modern pilgrimage route. Raj Kumar and his fellow travelers changed not only their route but even their final destination in 2004 due to the existence

1. Hin. a village or caste council; also used to mean an organizational body for religious minorities in Pakistan.

2. I have included a transliteration of this conversation here due to the fragmentary style of Raj Kumar's answer:

> *Lyārī se ham paidal gaye. Ūṁṭ meṃ sāmān rakhe. Ration* [English], *pānī . . . Vah merā pah'lā sāl thā. Megh'vāṛ'jī ke sāth gaye the. Hamāre mohalle ke baġal ye megh'vāṛ'jī log. Pāṁc laṛ'ke the ham. To ham* [*ne*] *dil meṃ socā "yār qalaṃdar mār'te—phir pahāṛ hī*

of an easier, "by road" walking route to Hinglaj. The foot journey from Liari[3] to Sehwan meant a long and grueling trek through the Pab mountain chain, a relatively arduous and exhausting path in comparison to the route to Hinglaj along the highway. The pilgrims had heard of the shrine and Hinglaj before they set out to Sehwan, but the stories about the shrine did not provide enough incentive to change their destination initially. Once en route, however, the extent of the difference between the paths became clear to them, and they decided to walk to Hinglaj instead of going over the difficult mountain path.

Raj also does not give any particular reason for why he decided to walk to these religious places in the first place. Like many other pilgrims, Raj only said that it was his heart's wish (*dil kī icchā*) to walk instead of taking the bus. He does not see any difference between those people who walk and those who sit in cars. For him it is merely a question of choice (*un kī mar'zī hai*). Raj Kumar also did not become the *chaṛīdār* of the group through some kind of ritual initiation, but, as he himself said, he became so simply because of the "order of the Mother" (*mātā kā hukm*). He describes the duties of a *chaṛīdār* like this:

> My work is to take care of them. But there is no *tension* [Engl.]. [I tell them,] "Look at the road, look at the cars and motorbikes around, and walk! The Mother does not want you to run around, just go straight and look out for the traffic—that is all!"

Thus, the role of the *chaṛīdār* has, for these pilgrims, lost some of its importance when compared to the representations of the traditional pilgrimage. The ritual expertise once embodied by the *aguā* is no longer the central characteristic of his role. The notion that the *chaṛīdār* must head the group is also less emphasized. Thus, among the Narayanpur pilgrims at least, the role of the *aguā* has effectively dissolved, shifting toward a wider distribution of power among the elders of the group.

4.3.2 The *Rath*

In the Narayanpur group, the *chaṛī* has also lost its central role in the pilgrims' ritual journey, at least in the sense that it was portrayed in the accounts given

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caṛh'te nūrānī ke liye. Mātā kā to rāstā sīdhā sīdhā hai. "By road" hai. Maiṃ ne bolā: "Jānā hai idhar!" Qalaṃdar mar gayā, udhar se niklā."

3. Here the village "Liari" in Balochistan is referred to. The famous neighborhood in Karachi of the same name is spelled "Lyari" to avoid confusion.

FIGURE 4.3 Pilgrims from Narayanpur, Karachi, pull a cart (Hin. *rath*) along the Makran Coastal Highway, 2012

above.[4] The Narayanpur pilgrims do, however, pull a cart (Hin. *rath*) with them along the way, which occupies an important position throughout their *yātrā* (see Fig. 4.3). The *rath* also serves as a gathering point at Hinglaj for those pilgrims from the Narayanpur neighborhood who come to the valley by bus. As I will discuss below, the cart was once also an important sign of resistance against the HSM's ticketing system, the *bhag'vā paṭṭī* (Hin. ochre ribbon).

The night before the group leaves Karachi, the *chaṛīdār* Raj Kumar organizes a *jāg'raṇ*, a religious wake in the local Ram Pir temple in which the pilgrims, their families, and other community members take part. The departure of the cart is initiated with the cracking of a coconut and a small ceremony attended by many in the neighborhood. In 2012, the group intended to leave after the *jāg'raṇ* at 4:00 a.m., but because of the neighborhood gunfire and shooting mentioned above, the group was forced to postpone their departure. Usually, influential local people are present at this occasion to bid the group farewell.

4. "*Is chaṛī ke prasādāt—arthāt is kī avahel'nā nahīṃ kar'ne se ham logoṃ kī yātrā nirvighna pūrī hogī*" (Abadhut 1964, 6).

The ornamented cart contains a 30-centimeter tall *mūrti* (Hin. idol, statue) of Sheravali Mata (literally "the Mother with the lion") and a picture of the Goddess, the oldest the Narayanpur Gujarati community possesses. Before the framed print, there is a small glass cabinet containing a flame from the Santoshi Mata temple in Narayanpur, which symbolizes the Goddess and stands for her protection along the way. The *rath* is painted ochre and bears ochre-colored flags on each of its four corners. Ochre is traditionally the color that pilgrims wear for the journey and so resembles the practices described in older accounts (Khatri 1973, 19). Inside the cart, the *yātrīs* also store their food, which consists mostly of *dāl*, some vegetables, and rice. Many within the multireligious neighborhood of Narayanpur consider donating food for this journey to be spiritually beneficial and thus give provisions irrespective of their religious affiliation. The *rath* also contains a small generator that produces light for walking during the night and electricity for a small amplifier that plays devotional songs. The pilgrims also see the whole *rath* itself as a type of "generator." They say that people who are tired from walking need only to hold on to the cart, and they immediately receive renewed strength for the journey. Two *chaṛīs*, instead of being carried by the leader as in the traditional accounts, are instead attached to the two front corners of the cart. The cart thus contains all the important tools necessary for the *yātrā*. As one pilgrim mentioned prior to the journey:

> There are many wild animals on the way, but the Mother always helps, and never has anyone been hurt. Nothing has ever happened to us. This is because we have the power of the *triśūl*, the *chaṛī*, and the *jhoṃk*, the flame that burns all the time in the *rath*. This flame is like our friend; it is sent by the Mother.

As can be discerned from this description, some of the previously introduced elements of the traditional *yātrā* resurface in the design of this cart. The primary position of the *chaṛī* is substituted by the central position of the cart. So although Raj Kumar is officially the *chaṛīdār*, he is not required or expected to carry the stick. All pilgrims push the cart together, and there is no particular rule about who can, or must, push the cart for how long. The practice of pushing a cart to Hinglaj is itself also not new, but the Gujarati community is proud to be the first group from the Narayanpur neighborhood to start doing it.

After the community has reached the valley of Hinglaj, they set up a small camp around the *rath* where they are joined by friends and family from the Narayanpur neighborhood who reached by bus. The young men sing *bhajans* while the *yātrīs* simply rest or socialize with friends and family. Because the

cart has been pulled by hand all the way from Karachi to Hinglaj, it stands out from the other ritual paraphernalia inside the valley. While flag posts and pictures of the Goddess brought on trucks or in cars are not given particular notice, the cart and its pilgrims catch the attention of many people. The Narayanpur pilgrims insist that the long and demanding journey fills the cart with the blessings of the Goddess. These are bestowed not only because of the group's physically strenuous effort but also because of the heartfelt devotion with which the pilgrims complete the journey to Hinglaj. The *rath* becomes "charged" (from a 2012 interview; original in English) with divine energy, they say, which, once it reaches the valley, can also be transferred to the bypassing people. The cart, which is centrally positioned, becomes the visible sign for the group's outstanding devotion and serves as an attraction for other visitors.

After the whole pilgrimage is completed, the end of the ritual journey is reached when the *chaṛī* attached to the *rath* is taken to the Mata Bhavani temple in Thatta, where it is "cooled down" in the temple's pond. The purpose of the act is to "recharge" the stick once more with the energy of the Goddess, which can then be transferred to the *yātrīs*. This final step, the journey from Hinglaj to Thatta to conclude the pilgrimage, is no longer done on foot. The Narayanpuris opt instead to take a bus and rent a pickup truck to carry the cart, meeting with other members of the community in Thatta a few days after the Hinglaj *melā*. After cooling down the *chaṛī* in Thatta, the pilgrimage ends, and the pilgrims are allowed to eat meat again.

4.3.3 The Resistance

As shown above, the *rath* plays an important role throughout the pilgrimage. However, in the years between 2009 and 2012, once the pilgrimage group had reached the valley, the *rath* also served another purpose. In 2009, the HSM decided to introduce an elaborate ticketing system in place of the former, rather loose arrangement of years past. The new system forced visitors wanting to enter the main part of the valley, where the Kali and Hinglaj temple are located, to wear a plastic wristband called the *bhag'vā paṭṭī* (Hin. ochre ribbon). According to HSM officials, the main purpose of the nontransferable wristband was to prevent several pilgrims from sharing one ticket, a common practice in the past. The plastic wristband had to be purchased in the valley for 250 rupees. This caused outrage among many pilgrims who fiercely opposed this ticketing system up until 2013 when the HSM decided to put an end to the practice. I will deal with this issue in further detail in the following chapters.

One attempt to resist this ticketing system came from the Narayanpur *yātrīs* who positioned the *rath* on the way to the ticket checkpoint. They explained that by putting the cart there, those who were not able to pay to enter the inner part of the valley could still receive a genuine *darśan* from the cart's *mūrti*. One pilgrim describes the situation like this in March 2012:

> The cart is the symbol of the [walking] pilgrims; we pray there for all those who are not able to come to the *melā* of Hinglaj. Today there are these tickets sold, you know, so those who cannot afford to pay the entry fee go to this cart and pay tribute to it. They get the blessings from there. So many people think that this cart is miraculous and do their prayers there. They think it is their cart.

As described above, the practice of pulling the cart all the way to Hinglaj gives it a kind of legitimacy among other pilgrims, which makes its use as a substitute temple possible. This role as an alternative temple cannot be filled by just any kind of religious object; it requires use of an entity associated with an exceptional practice, like the pulling of the cart from Karachi. By offering the cart to those who were not able to afford tickets into the *melā*, the Narayanpur *yātrīs* thereby extended the blessings of the Goddess—gained from their own physical efforts—to other pilgrims whose plans to enter the valley had been thwarted by the ticketing system. In this way, the Narayanpur pilgrims directly challenged the monopoly of the HSM as the sole access point to the Goddess until the ticketing system was aborted in 2013. Similar to the traditional accounts introduced above, here too, we find the importance of the kinesthetic experience—this time centralized and even transferrable in the form of the cart.

4.4 Transnational Pilgrimage and Restricted Mobility

I now turn to the topic of transnational pilgrimage through a case study of Indian devotees coming to Hinglaj. Borders have a tremendous impact on communities, shaping not just daily routines but also economies and identities. As will be indicated by the Hinglaj case, borders may also play a role in strengthening the "symbolic capital" of a particular place, that is, the value it bestows upon those who cross a border to reach it (Bourdieu 1998, 47–52). Such symbolic capital may help one to achieve an outstanding position within a certain society by gaining access to an otherwise restricted area. While traditionally it was the fierce journey through the desert that bestowed huge

symbolic capital onto the pilgrims, today, this restriction of Hinglaj is rearticulated for Indian devotees through the fierce India-Pakistan border.

Fieldwork at and around geopolitical borders is often difficult and depends heavily on the relationship between the two nation states under examination. State borders are necessarily political and ultimately lead one into the center of nation state ideology. With the meeting of geography and history, borders present a central aspect of a community's narratives, reinforcing national identity. The India-Pakistan border presents a particular challenge due to the contentious relationship between the nations, so fieldwork is very often limited to documenting the experience of those who had crossed the border but not the situation at the border itself.

This analysis of geopolitical borders and their impact on particular communities at and in contact with them forms an independent field of study that aims to understand identity formation within modern nation states (cf. Hastings and Wilson 1999; van Schendel 2005; Gupta and Ferguson 1992). The introduction of borders in populated areas often divides communities and economies and in certain cases even plays a role in reshaping whole landscapes. People who live at borders are frequently under the impact of an enlarged state presence through police patrols, checkpoints, or even military activities. Those living in proximity to relatively new geopolitical borders can become motivated through certain kinds of "interpellation" (Althusser 1971) by the nation state to turn their backs on localized identity in favor of a new, nationalized one (Purewal 2003, 546). But aside from their general cleaving tendencies, geopolitical borders might also be an opening for new economic opportunities and new strategies for developing group cohesion. Studies about cross-border movements have shown that communities on either side of modern geopolitical borders often establish rules, regulations, and microeconomies between themselves that are independent from those of the state (cf. Flynn 1997; Hastings and Haller 2000; Hastings and Wilson 1999). Similarly, borders can also reshape the routes of ritual journeys and affect practices at pilgrimage sites (Harder 2013, 151). Where borders suddenly hinder access to important religious places, new narratives are formed that help to include the new situation within the general religious imaginary. Coping mechanisms in the event of this type of separation sometimes include the construction of "proxy shrines" that are built to substitute for an unreachable site.

There are many such proxy shrines for Hinglaj in India. Some of them were established long before the separation of the subcontinent, and others were the result of the rigid visa policy put in place afterward (for a list of Hinglaj temples in India, see Lakhavat 2011). One of the best known is the

shrine of Temra Rai in Rajasthan. A Charan devotee by the name of Anoop Dan claimed some decades ago that he had a dream in which the Goddess appeared to him saying that since her shrine in Balochistan was no longer reachable, the site of Temra Rai should be visited by Charans in its place. Another similar account claims that Karni Mata in Deshnok would now have the same significance as Hinglaj and that devotees should frequent her place instead. In Gujarat, one devotee called in a press conference in 2011 to introduce a new Hinglaj temple in Nakatrana. He announced that the Goddess had appeared to him in a dream and advised him of the temple's remote desert location, after which he founded a temple committee to run it. During my fieldwork in Gujarat, the organization was in the process of constructing a tunnel leading to the temple's Hinglaj statue in order to simulate the cave setting of the original temple in Balochistan.

Even though such "proxy shrines" are widely distributed all over South Asia, they rarely live up to the fame of the sites they represent. Thus, given its characteristic of restricting mobility and creating impediments to accessing holy places lying on the opposite side, a border may also play a role in increasing a place's symbolic capital. For Bourdieu, symbolic capital "produces . . . a capital of recognition which permits . . . to exert symbolic effects" (Bourdieu 1998, 102). Narratives of longing and separation can further validate the spiritual merit of the journey due to the heightened emotional sacrifice connected to the task and hence elevate a place's symbolic capital.

4.4.1 "The Hinglaj Pilgrimage Is Not Easy": Challenges and Chances from an Indian Perspective

While so far in this chapter my examination of mobility representations and rearticulation by pilgrims has been limited to sources in Pakistan, I will now come back to how the Hinglaj pilgrimage is perceived on the other side of the border, among the Goddess's devotees in India. For that, I will not only build on texts but will also use data from my fieldwork in India in 2009 and 2011. As already demonstrated, many communities in India have a strong emotional connection to the Goddess Hinglaj. For the male members of the Charan *jāti*, for example, the journey to the shrine ought to be undertaken once in their lifetime. With the partition of the subcontinent and the closing of the borders, however, access to the shrine was significantly limited, and new strategies of dealing with this situation had to be found. What are the dynamics associated with this journey for devotees from India? How do people cope with the fact that the main abode of their clan or family Goddess (Hin. *kul'devī*) is now located in Pakistan? To answer this question, I will introduce some of the basic

issues for Indian devotees and then look at two case studies of cross-border pilgrimages from India into Pakistan.

"The Hinglaj Pilgrimage Is Not Easy" (Depavat 2010) is a chapter in the Hindi book *Śrī Kar'ṇījī Durlabh Darśan*, and it sums up many of the main concerns for Indian pilgrims. The following is the author's explanation of the new challenges inherent in undertaking the pilgrimage after Partition:

> The problems for which the pilgrimage to Hinglaj is considered difficult are no longer present today. But it is necessary to make it clear that to this day this pilgrimage is still difficult to accomplish. Earlier there were certain kinds of difficulties and now there are other kinds. Today there are the formalities of the passport and the visa, the problems of Islamic countries like Pakistan, there is some doubt in guaranteeing the security of the Indian travelers, and [also] due to local terror attacks the pilgrimage cannot be considered easy . . . . Without the help of the Shri Hinglaj Sheva Mandali this pilgrimage is impossible. (Depavat 2010, 153)

As Depavat describes, one of the biggest hurdles for Indians who want to do the *yātrā* today is getting a visa for Pakistan. Further, they must obtain an additional visa allowing travel to Balochistan, a province that has been in a state of a latent insurgency since the establishment of Pakistan (Axmann 2012). At the time of writing, to obtain such a visa—aside from the general formalities like a valid passport, visa fee, and so forth—an Indian applicant was also required to present evidence of a sponsor in Pakistan to be responsible for their safety. Further, at the time of writing, once in Pakistan, an Indian visa holder must register at a police station within twenty-four hours of arrival, after any change of place, and again twenty-four hours before their departure.[5]

Access to Balochistan is further limited by its legal ambiguity since "Non-Objection Certificates" (NOC) must be obtained from the government, but the legal status of an application for such a certificate is unclear. Singh Ratnu, a Charan author who wrote a book about his journey to Hinglaj in 2007, emphasizes in his travelogue how dangerous it is to travel to Balochistan with a visa that is valid only for Karachi. However, in the very next paragraph, he writes that the government of Pakistan actually does not issue visas for the journey to Balochistan and that in fact the High Commission has explicitly forbidden the handling of such applications (Ratnu 2007, 28). Since such

5. See also http://www.dgip.gov.pk/Files/VisaforIndian.aspx.

orders are apparently not strictly enforced, the journey has no proper legal status and thus is likely to involve bribery and nepotism. Discussions began in 2007 regarding the inclusion of Hinglaj in a list of religious places that can be mutually visited by citizens of each country, but so far, those discussions have produced no successful outcome.[6] At the time of writing, both parties were in the process of amending the visa formalities for group traveling, but relations between the two countries remain volatile. Such logistical challenges may be problematic for pilgrims to Hinglaj, but, on the other hand, they also present an opportunity for many travel agents with good connections to embassies and consulates to make some money from devotees who are keen on traveling to the shrine. One such example will be discussed in detail below.

Another important point touched on by Depavat is the perception of a lack of security "in Islamic countries like Pakistan."[7] While such fears are not completely groundless, they indicate a mutual lack of information, which drives reciprocal stereotyping and misconceptions. One of the most insistent *clichés* among Indian pilgrims is connected to this security issue and the belief in a constant threat, especially for Indian nationals in the country. Some devotees in Delhi even claimed that some years ago, the Taliban attacked the Hinglaj temple, which the devotees assert was once encompassed in an almost completely closed cave. Blasting away the rock resulted in the temple's current shape. Another rumor asserts that in 2006, three pilgrims from Rajkot, in Gujarat, were kidnapped and killed on their way to the temple. Both stories turned out to be sheer fabrications. I have no intention to downplay the lingering problems of the Hindu community in Pakistan or ignore the willingness of radical elements to use violence against non-Muslim minorities (Schaflechner 2014, 2016a, 2016b, 2017). At this point, however, I am interested in the atmosphere surrounding Hinglaj as a result of such discourses of danger and hostility. The following part of an October 2011 interview with the head of a fairly new Hinglaj temple in Delhi is representative of the issue:

> My guru had a dream of the Goddess Hinglaj in which she told him to build her temple here in India, because there is no proper worship [*pūjā arcanā*] in Pakistan. [The Goddess told him] that barbarians [*mlecch*] rule the country, and that terrorists have taken over her temple. Her followers do not dare to go to her abode anymore and her worship

6. *Times of India*, March 20, 2007 (Chatterjeel 2007, http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2007-03-10/india/27887635_1_pilgrimage-bengali-film-indian-pilgrims).

7. "*pākistān jaise islāmik rāṣṭra kī dikkateṃ . . .*" (Depavat 2010, 153).

> has ceased. Due to that reason my Guru gave me the order to build this temple here [in Delhi].

In general, such stereotypes about Pakistan add to the dangerous aura and the mystification of the shrine, which, in some ways, newly articulates discourses of danger and difficulty found in older representations of the journey. All of these elements add up to a general perception of the journey to Hinglaj as very dangerous and demanding—even today. So, notwithstanding the fact that the journey has become much easier in Pakistan, on the other side of the border, the pilgrimage still enjoys an air of prestige and is treated as a once-in-a-lifetime event. The current priest at the Mata Bhawani temple in Thatta concisely explained his perception of the difference between Indian and Pakistani visitors to Hinglaj in a November 2010 interview:

> The difference between Indians and Pakistanis is that the Pakistani brothers go there for a picnic. The Indians come with an open heart. They want to go and want to be successful so when they go back they can be called "Hinglajis." That is the difference. They think: "We come from so far, we spend so much money so we will do the whole thing [*ham hiṃglāj kareṃge*]." Our Pakistani brothers think: "We go, we take a walk, make a little picnic, and we return." That is the difference. Of 1,000 Pakistanis who go to Hinglaj only 50 do it properly. They are the only Hinglajis [here]. When [Indians] go back and tell everyone that they came from Pakistan and that they had gone to Hinglaj then people are very happy. Here the people are not happy anymore, they go home, sit down and they say: "Well . . . we came from Hinglaj." (Schaflechner 2011, 14:05)

The priest describes a certain kind of depreciation among the Pakistani Hindus at the shrine today. For him, the Indian visitors are the "real" pilgrims who rightly deserve the title of Hinglaji, while most of their Pakistani counterparts do not value the shrine and maybe fifty out of a thousand "do it properly." I have already talked about how such ideas of "real" and "proper" practice organize and solidify the community. At this point, however, we find another kind of distinction: the debasement and decline within the Pakistani-Hindu community compared to the "real" traditions coming from India. And indeed, I rarely heard disappointing comments about the "Hinglaj-experience" on the Indian side of the border. Besides Kandan Barhath—a pilgrim who accompanied former Indian minister Jaswant Singh's party and lamented the shallowness of the journey resulting from its political leanings (Barhath

2006)—those who make the journey are generally deeply satisfied with their experience. The difficulties of overcoming the Kafkaesque bureaucratic maze in order to travel between the two nation states is often interpreted as the hardship necessary for pilgrims before they may face the Goddess. Devotees often interpret the uncertainties and frustrations involved in the process as signs of the Devī's "game" (Hin. *līlā*). A successful journey following the arduous process therefore also indicates a type of devotee filtering process by the Mother, which increases their prestige upon return. While in the time before the construction of the Makran Coastal Highway the long and grueling journey to the shrine served as this filtering process, today, the established border has a similar role in keeping the journey to the Goddess "elite." The demanding and potentially lethal trek through the desert once kept access to the shrine restricted; now, this restriction remains in place for Indian pilgrims as a result of the fierce visa policies paired with the fear of the unknown in neighboring Pakistan. Thus, from the perspective of power, the prestige connected with the journey from India to the remote temple in Balochistan may be seen as the exclusion of many for the sake of a few. These exceptional few gain a certain symbolic capital and rise in the regard of their communities. In the following, I will give two, albeit very different, case studies to exemplify this point.

4.4.1.1 The Charan Connection

> *"From the moment a Charan is born, Mother Hinglaj waits for him to come for the* darśan*; if he leaves the world otherwise [without having visited the shrine], then a stone falls from the Mother's mountain."*
>
> (BARHATH 2006, 9)

For the Charan of west India, the Goddess Hinglaj is the *ādiśakti* (Skt.), the primordial energy that has proliferated through their community for many generations (Westphal and Westphal-Hellbusch 1976; Samaur 1999; Kamphorst 2008). The journey to the shrine in Balochistan ought to be made by every Charan once in their lifetime and is thus the *sine qua non* ritual for many. For the Charans, the pilgrimage is also a commemorative ceremony, remembering and renewing a bond they have shared with the Goddess for ages. The bards' histories show that people started going to Hinglaj from very early in their recorded history. Those who returned were viewed with awe and treated with immense respect. These "Hinglajis" often established Hinglaj temples in their cities and villages, and in a few cases even made the Goddess appear by herself locally (Skt. *svayambhū*) as a result of their devotion. Tokens from Balochistan are held in high esteem, and some of them are still kept in temples

to this day. Homecomers were seen as a divine gift since, as the Charans say, the Goddess herself had blessed such pilgrims and allowed them to return safely from the brink of death.

With the separation of the subcontinent and the subsequent border fortification, this community's ability to travel to the shrine has been significantly altered. Previously, pilgrims had to fight physical exhaustion and the difficulties of a desert landscape. Now, they must grapple with volatile politics and labyrinthine bureaucratic processes. Today, only rarely can Charans obtain visas for the journey to Pakistan; however, when they do, they must do so with the help of agents, in many cases as a part of tours organized by Pakistani tour operators. Today, the epithet "Hinglaji" is still used in the community for people who went on the *yātrā*. In their mytho-historic narratives about the border crossing, the will of the Goddess is the central axis of the story, and the possibility of reaching the cave in Balochistan is solely a question of her will. She is the one who influences the employees working in the Pakistani embassy to issue visas, or who causes airport security personnel to get distracted at the right time. Thus, the whole pilgrimage—from the initial desire to receive the *darśan*, to the problems of obtaining a visa, up to the actual journey itself—is interpreted as the will of the Goddess and is frequently framed within the prevailing idea that the Mother has finally called her Charan offspring to meet her at her abode (see Barhath 2008).

For an in-depth description, I will focus on the journey of one member of the Maru Charan community, Rajendra Singh, a government employee with whom I spent some time during my fieldwork in Rajasthan. Rajendra went to Hinglaj in 2004 with a group of five people under the guidance of the Hinglaj Sheva Mandali. He recalls the story of his own pilgrimage with joy and often tells anecdotes about the Goddess's *līlā*. He repeatedly mentions how lucky he was as an "*ām ād'mī*" (Hin. ordinary man) to gain Hinglaj's *darśan* at the shrine in Balochistan. Rajendra Singh lives with his family on the outskirts of Jaipur and invited me to stay with him over the course of my research there. For him, as for a great deal of other Charans I met during my stay, the fact that I had visited the abode of Hinglaj several times and that I had the intention of writing about the Goddess in Pakistan was more than just simple scholarly interest. It was the will and the game (Hin. *līlā*) of the Goddess who had decided to make herself better known with the help of a European PhD student. Thus, the community supported me in my research in a forthcoming and unique way that I had not encountered in many prior years in India. From my most simple needs of shelter and food to the facilitation of transport and books, I received much help, and I was not permitted to give anything in return. On my repeated attempts to show my gratitude and honor,

I received the simple answer, "I did not do anything, whatever you get is all the Goddess's mercy. She herself wants that your work should be successful."[8]

For Rajendra, one of the most important parts of the journey was that he had the chance to take several stones (Hin. *piṃḍ*, Skt. *piṇḍa*) from the River Aghor with him, which he used to found a Hinglaj Mata temple in his home village, Mandapi, near Jaipur (see Fig. 4.4).[9] His story reflects many important elements of the transborder pilgrimage and thus should be provided here in detail. The following is a paraphrase of Rajendra's recollections of his trip recorded in 2011.

> There is a Bhairava [Shiva] temple in my village. It was only on account of his grace that an ordinary man like me was able to go to Hinglaj to do the *piṃḍ pūjā* there and come back safely. To tell you frankly, I actually did not have the intention to go to Hinglaj. The whole story happened like this: a fight broke out in my village over a small piece of land. In the course of these events I came up with the idea to turn this place into a Karni Mata temple to solve the problem. I also asked one of my uncles for his opinion and he said: "See, the idea of building a temple there is not new; it has been considered before by our forefathers." He told me that my grandfather had already tried, but he had died before he could realize his plan. My father had also tried, but his attempt had not worked out either. My uncle suggested asking Bhairava, my chosen deity [*iṣṭ'dev*], about this issue. So, I went to our temple and performed the *iki*,[10] but I did not get the permission from Bhairava to build the temple. I thought: "Prabhu, until you give me your blessing I will not move from here." So, I started to meditate. Then a strange incident happened. In my village, there is a person who frequently comes to the fields close to the temple to give water to the buffalos. But on this day, he left the animals alone. To this day, when you talk to him, he does not know what happened. I had not told anyone about my plans yet, but he came straight up to me and said: "Brother, you can't establish

8. "*Ham ne to kuch nahīṃ kiyā. Jo āp ko mil'tā hai, yah sab mātā ki kṛpā hai. Yah xud cāh'tī hai ki āp kā kām saphal ho jāe.*"

9. The presentation of Shiva or the Devi in the form of stones is very common all over the subcontinent (Dyczkowski 2009, 247).

10. The *iki* is a way for devotees to ask the guidance of a deity. In this system, a small amount of grain, like rice or wheat, usually used during the *pūjā*, is picked up randomly and counted. If the grains that were picked up are an odd number, then it is believed that the deity agrees to the intention of the inquirer. This can be repeated several times.

FIGURE 4.4 Rajendra Singh in front of a Hinglaj *mūrti* with the installed *piṃḍ* in Mandapi village

a Karni Mata temple in your village! We already have one!" What he meant is this: on Holi or Diwali the people of my village usually go to salute [*praṇām kar'nā*] Karni Mata in a temple a little further away. If another Karni temple were constructed in our village, my people would simply do the *darśan* right here. Now I understood that this was also the reason why the temple could not be built here before. So, then I thought I should try to get the permission to build a temple for the *ādiśakti* Hinglaj. I took some of the grains again to ask Bhairava for his permission and I immediately got it! I told of this incident in an assembly with the rest of the village and they agreed. Only one of the guests came up to me and said: "Please don't be upset but I want to tell you something. All of your people [from the Charan community] say that Hinglaj Mata is the most important Devi and that she is your clan Goddess, but still there are only a few Hinglaj temples around here. Do you know the reason for that? The reason is that you can't establish a Hinglaj temple without having gone on the pilgrimage to the original [*mūl*] Hinglaj in Pakistan. You have to go there and you have to take

> something such as a *triśūl* or a *piṃḍ* with you. Then you will be successful!" I thought: "Okay, if Bhairuji has given me permission then he will also supply everything else." In my mind the idea grew to go to Hinglaj for the *darśan*. In those days, many knew that Hinglaj is in Pakistan, but no one had any idea where exactly and how it was possible to reach there. About four months later, an acquaintance from Jaipur who had gone to Hinglaj in 1991 gave me the phone number of the Hinglaj Sheva Mandali in Karachi and I contacted them. About seven or eight months after that the invitation letter came. There were five of us who wanted to go—three from Gandhidham [Gujarat] and one from Calcutta. The guy from Calcutta had tried for over ten years to get the visa, the Gujaratis had even tried for fourteen years! We all went to Delhi and with the grace of the Goddess we got the visa right away. In Karachi, we met the people of the Mandali Trust who took us to get the *darśan* at Hinglaj. At the Aghor River I took some flat stones with me. But the Mandali people told me that the security officers at the airport wouldn't allow me to take them. But I thought that if Mataji has arranged everything so far she would also arrange it now. So, we went to the airport, and in the very moment when my bag went into the X-ray machine, someone came to meet the officer in charge and started a conversation. My bag came out and there was no trouble. There were so many other wonders that happened to me after that, but the biggest was that I was able to get the *darśan* of Hinglaj.

Rajendra brought five flat stones with him that he had picked up from the riverbed of the Hingol. Two of them—in his reckoning, images of Bhairava and Hinglaj—were installed in the newly constructed temple in his hometown in Mandapi. Another one he placed in his family shrine in Jaipur, and two he presented to his family. Other Charans were puzzled by his interpretation and did not support the idea that it is absolutely necessary to have been at Hinglaj to establish one of her temples. For Rajendra, however, these stones are tangible, divine markers with the ability to separate the real from the artificial temples. To support this idea, he links his own story to a corpus of oral narratives found in a few parts of Rajasthan, which relate that only those people who had come back from the pilgrimage could establish a Devi temple. For him, it is only these temples that are the real (Hin. *asal*) places of the Goddess.

Rajendra's description is full of miracles, and he found many small signs of divine intervention on the way. His mytho-historic account of the journey was an encouragement for many around him. The video he took of the trip was widely circulated among the devotees of Hinglaj, encouraging others to

apply for visas. This also served as advertisement for the work of the HSM, who benefitted from the circulation as well. After his trip, Rajendra gained a certain local celebrity status because of this adventure, and, according to him, people even started to approach him for advice. But Rajendra was conscious about his newly gained position within his village and even within the entire Charan society. Once when I asked Rajendra what had changed for him following the pilgrimage, he simply repeated the question back to me, asking me how I felt as someone who had been to Hinglaj and was now staying in a Charan community. The first thing that came to my mind was the immense hospitality and the respect with which people treated me. This answer was enough for Rajendra. He added that this was the blessing of the Goddess, and if I wanted an answer to how the lives of people change after they go to Hinglaj, I should just look at my own situation.

Rajendra also pointed out that his newfound status was mainly due to the difficulties of obtaining a visa for Pakistan. "If the border were not there, then people would not value the pilgrimage so much," he once said. For him, the main power of the *yātrā* lies in the effort that people put into reaching the place, as he emphasized in a conversation in 2011:

> Whatever you want to get in this world, you have to work for it. The bigger the thing is that you wish for, the more you need to work for it. But this is not only hard work; it also means you need devotion. The old pilgrimage was difficult, the pilgrimage now is difficult, and it seems that in the future, too, it is going to be difficult.

Rajendra was also very critical of certain wealthy Charan businessmen who, in his opinion, simply bribed some embassy clerks in order to obtain their visas. In his opinion, their pilgrimage was not as valuable since they did not put any effort into the journey. For Rajendra, the meaning of being a "real" Hinglaji comes not only from the respect society shows him but also from the sacrifices he is willing to make on the way.

This case study shows that even though the physical pilgrimage in Pakistan became significantly easier in recent decades, Charan devotees from India still rarely have the chance to visit Hinglaj. As another Charan from Barmer once put it: "Then it was difficult to go there [and] now it is difficult to get there!"[11] This raises the cultural prestige of the journey and gives Hinglajis

11. "*Us vaq't vahāṃ cal'nā muśkil thā, āj vahāṃ jānā muśkil hai*." From a personal conversation in Barmer in November 2011.

an outstanding position within their society. Similar to the various stories and legends Rajendra told me about, his own account is also a tale of difficulty, faith, and devotion. In this way, his description resembles Charan mythologies and general representations of the *yātrā* dealing with *tapasyā* and divine intervention, and so connects current events to the vast body of Charan legends surrounding the shrine.

4.4.1.2 The Kapri Connection

In the following I describe the 2010 journey of a group of pilgrims from Kutch in Gujarat that reached the shrine with the guidance and help of Dayaram Kapri, a modern-day *aguā* who organized the trip and also served the pilgrims as a ritual expert. Dayaram hails from the Kapri community, introduced in Chapter 2, and he himself went to Hinglaj for the first time in 2004. From then onward, he continued going regularly and also began taking larger groups, mainly from Gujarat. The group whose journey I relate here consisted mainly of male farmers from the Ahir community, but members of other castes such as the Rabari were also present. An elderly Jain man also accompanied the party. And including Dayaram's daughter, there were three women in the group.

As in the Charan community, in the Kutch area of Gujarat, returnees from Hinglaj are also treated with awe and respect and are frequently given the epithet "Hinglaji." In addition to this, however, there is another practice in this area that translates the symbolic capital earned on the journey into tangible practices. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Hinglajis in Kutch are not—as usual—burned on the pyre, but rather are buried in small shrines called *samādhis*, where they are remembered and worshipped by their ancestors. This practice originates from the notion that every visitor to Hinglaj is reborn from the womb of the Goddess and thus gains the *ātmā*[12] of a newborn child. They also may assume the name Kapri, as was mentioned in Chapter 2. This tradition indicates that the journey to Hinglaj has the power to change devotees' ritual status, not only transforming them into a Hinglaji but also changing them into *dev'ātmās* (Hin. divine soul) after their death. Here, the relationship between the Kapris and *dev'ātmās* deserves some explanation. While Kapris can become *dev'ātmās* through the journey to Hinglaj, all *dev'ātmās* automatically become (half) Kapris after their successful pilgrimage. Dayaram asserted

12. *Ātman* (Skt.) or *ātmā* (Hin.) is a sophisticated concept within Hindu cosmology and cannot be discussed here at length. However, due to my engagement with this particular tradition in Gujarat, in my opinion, translating it here as "soul" is fairly accurate.

FIGURE 4.5 *Samādhis* of returnees from Hinglaj near Bhuj, Gujarat, 2011

that this practice is found all over India, but so far, I have only encountered it in Kutch, where many little shrines are found as evidence (see Fig. 4.5).

On festival days particularly, but also during the year, these locations are visited by family members and friends who worship the deceased with incense and *siṃdūr* (Schaflechner 2011, 40:40). This case study shows the significant role of the border in bestowing a form of special status upon the returnees, necessary for its prestige. The symbolic capital it entails rests on the restricted access to the shrine for Indian pilgrims. As in times past when the difficult desert route restricted movement to the shrine, now rigid visa regulations keep the number of the Hinglajis and *dev'ātmās* low and thus the practice alive. It is due only to the contingencies surrounding the selection of pilgrims—particularly those resulting from opaque visa regulations and the legal ambiguity of the journey to a restricted area of Balochistan—that notions of divine selection can be maintained.

Besides a few people, most in the group had not met before and were only connected through their shared relation with Dayaram. The mood in the party was good; many pilgrims joked around, and no one seemed anxious about traveling through Pakistan. Dayaram told stories about the history of the shrine and entertained the group with anecdotes about the Goddess and former pilgrims. It was the group's first night in Karachi, and many were excited and

willing to talk about their journey and their expectations. Most of the people were farmers, and Dayaram often told me how difficult it was to organize the trip since most of them had never boarded a train, let alone been on an airplane. He also gave me a few interviews, which I documented using my voice recorder or video camera.[13] The video camera in particular affected the group dynamic, and whenever one or more of the visitors were recorded, a part of the group gathered to see and hear what was going on. Many pilgrims apparently overestimated my influence on the media landscape and were of the opinion that they would appear on television in Europe or America. My repeated explanations did not help lower their expectations of my role in the media. Thus, many were very eager to be in the film and often squeezed themselves into the back of the frame. My interviewees also used the camera to address a wider audience. Many spoke about politics and praised Pakistan and its people. One of the most skilled interviewees, in his role as the film's protagonist, was Dayaram himself, who often gave lengthy interviews in which he addressed the group and me at the same time. The interviews, therefore, had a double audience: an imagined "Western" public as well as the rest of the pilgrimage group, who were always eager to follow the events. The fact that the party was touring through Pakistan also incentivized many to talk about politics and to amend stereotypes about the country in front of an implicit audience. Some pilgrims emphasized how impressed they were by the good condition of Hindu temples in Pakistan—much to the contrary of how they had imagined it would be—and praised the government for building a road to the Hinglaj shrine.

The journey was undertaken in an air-conditioned bus that, on the visitors' second day, whisked them from their accommodation in the Swaminarayan temple in Karachi to Thatta and afterward to the valley of Hinglaj, where they stayed for a night in one of the pilgrim shelters. Their journey's structure was similar to that of the pilgrimage advertised by the HSM today, with the small difference that before entering the Goddess's tunnel (Hin. *garbha*), the Gujarati group visited Anil Kund, a pond atop one of the hill chains in Chaurasi. They seemed to attribute much more importance to Anil Kund than Pakistani devotees generally do. At each of the various stops (Hin. *paṛāv*), Dayaram recited Gujarati verses out of what he claimed to be the *Himgulā Purāṇ*.[14]

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13. I accompanied the group on almost all of their stops during this five-day trip and also visited some of them a year later in Gujarat. This trip and their lives twelve months later back in Gujarat are documented in the film "On Becoming Gods" (Schaflechner 2011).

14. From time to time, he translated the verses into Hindi, but notwithstanding my repeated requests, he was not willing to show me his written notes. Dayaram also insisted that the

Since I have already documented this trip extensively elsewhere (Schaflechner 2011), I will only sketch out the main stops and events. After the group did their offerings at the Mata Bhawani temple in Thatta (Schaflechner 2011, 11:00), they returned to Karachi where they stayed for the night. The next day, the bus took them straight to the village Liari where, according to Dayaram, the fireplace of Lalu Jasraj, the *aguā* of Ramacandra's party and the first Kapri, is found (see Chapter 2). Under Dayaram's guidance, the pilgrims received the *bhag'vā* there, the saffron-colored piece of cloth that serves as a sign of the Goddess's protection on the way (Schaflechner 2011, 17:00). After a rest break at the temple, the bus drove directly to a small hut on the Makran Coastal Highway where the HSM had organized a off-road vehicle to pick up the pilgrims and transport them to Chandrakup mud volcano. There, everybody climbed to the top and, per Dayaram's instruction, threw a coconut into the crater (Schaflechner 2011, 23:00). Since the mud was fairly solid on that day, only a few coconuts submerged into the volcano. However, no one seemed bothered by that, and they all continued their journey. Dayaram later said that according to the tradition, people would not be allowed to continue if their offering was not accepted, but since the Goddess had already brought the pilgrims from a place so far away, she surely wanted to see them at her abode. Later the same evening, the group reached the shrine of Hinglaj, where they performed *pūjā* until late in the night. Over the course of the evening, two news teams—one from the local Sindhi television station and another from the national Dawn station—arrived and interviewed Dayaram along with some HSM officials (Schaflechner 2011, 29:30). All of those interviewed emphasized the importance of the place and urged the governments of both India and Pakistan to loosen the visa regulations for Hinglaj so that more people would be able to make the journey. Early the next morning, under the guidance of a descendant of Dost Mohammad, whose family had been in charge of the shrine until the HSM took over the organization in 1986, the group set out to Anil Kund where they took the last purification bath (Schaflechner 2011, 33:00) before they entered the Goddess's *garbha* and circumambulated the *mūrti* through a tunnel in the mountain (Schaflechner 2011, 34:30). The group did not show any particular interest in the ponds that lay a little way inside the valley, and other than some adulation at Til Kund, they performed no other ritual activities. It was obvious that the circumambulation through the tunnel in the

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story of Rama's pilgrimage was in this book, but, as I have mentioned, the version of the *Hiṃgulā Purāṇ* that I currently possess only contains a short mention and no extensive account.

mountain was the climax of the group's journey. Afterward, the pilgrims were euphoric; one group member simply said: "I am very happy, I am very happy, I am full of bliss, I came here to the Mother, I completed this very difficult journey today, I am very happy." After the circumambulation, the bus took them back to Karachi where they had another day that was free for shopping in the nearby markets.

Naturally, pilgrims came away with a variety of different impressions of their journey. While some of the better-educated members of the group interpreted the trip in philosophical or political terms, it seemed that the aspects of purification, remission, and ridding oneself of sins were the main incentives for the members of the Ahir community. I got this impression not only from my conversations during the journey but also a year later when I met Dayaram again in his ashram close to Bhuj. There, I talked to two Ahir women, a mother and daughter who came to get information about the possibility of going to Hinglaj. The daughter inquired for her mother who, as Dayaram translated for me, wanted to go to Hinglaj before she died so she could cleanse herself of all her misdoings. Dayaram repeatedly ensured them that the journey is also for women and that his daughter had also gone on it. The women's family was apparently well off and had offered to pay for the trip with money earned through renting a tractor to other farmers.

On the journey, no one explicitly discussed the prospect of being buried in a little shrine after his or her death. But at times, when I asked about the idea directly, people generally seemed amused and made jokes to one another about how they would eventually become worshipped as *bābās*.[15] Dayaram, however, never tired of telling everybody how they would be honored in their own *samādhi* after they had turned 100 years old. It was obvious that he told this story frequently, and he repeatedly used the same phrases. Even a year later in Gujarat, when he showed me the *samādhis* of some returnees, he used the same words and phrases he had used in Pakistan. This is how he usually told the story:

> In Hinglaj all kinds of sins are destroyed, and there is a rule that whoever goes there is called Hinglaji. After pilgrims have lived a full life of 100 years, they are not burnt on the pyre, but instead worshipped in a shrine [*samādhi*] as *dev'ātmās* [divine souls]. As in temples, other people will do *pūjā* for them. And whoever comes back from Hinglaj becomes

15. *Bābā* is usually used as a respectful title for elder people, but here, it implies someone with a certain religious knowledge.

> a part of the Kapri sect. Like saints they are not simply burnt, but everybody gets a shrine, and everybody will be worshipped. On festival days people will come, and put *siṃdūr* [vermilion] on their *samādhis*. That is the rule![16]

A year later, I visited some members of the group in Gujarat to show them the completed videotape following their journey and to see how their life had changed since their return. Unfortunately, only a few of the returned pilgrims responded to my invitation and, even though I had Dayaram's help, most of the Ahir men were no longer traceable. But the general consensus among those I was able to meet was that they were very content with their journey and that they had gained a more joyous and peaceful life since their return. One pilgrim said that the trip had showed him that people in Pakistan were not so different from people in India and that terrorists are only a small part of the Pakistani population. As to the question whether they would now receive a personal shrine after their death, all agreed that they would since every Hinglaji must be buried in a *samādhi*.

4.4.1.3 The Salvation Market

As mentioned above, the rigid control of movement at and around the geopolitical border can actually generate new business opportunities and prompt changes in power distribution. Since, as demonstrated by the case studies above, Indian returnees from Hinglaj tend to gain an outstanding position in their societies, it comes as no surprise that a market dedicated to the organization of such cross-border journeys has developed. The journey's immense importance for many Charan, Brahmakshatria, and other communities (described in Chapter 2) explains why members of such communities are willing to pay huge amounts of money to complete it. In representations of the traditional pilgrimage introduced above, the *aguā* served as the group's leader who provided important ritual and geographical know-how that guaranteed the journey's success. Similarly, the modern *aguās* are responsible for the well-being of the pilgrims, but today they must also provide bureaucratic connections and the political sophistication necessary for leading groups over the border. To further illustrate their role in today's transborder pilgrimages, I will now introduce the work of two such modern-day guides ("*aguā* 1" and "*aguā* 2"), who organize cross-border tours together with Pakistani locals catering to devotees from all over India.

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16. One variation of this speech is found in Schaflechner (2011, 7:00).

Aguā 1, whom I met with a group of pilgrims he guided in Karachi, is an entrepreneur who exemplifies the business opportunities that have arisen for contemporary ritual guides/tour organizers to Hinglaj. In my interviews with him, he mentioned that he charges around 60,000 Indian rupees (at that time approximately €700) for the organization of the journey, including the cost of the flight from Bombay to Karachi. Some of the members of his pilgrimage group had been saving up money for years or had even sold land or cattle to be able to afford the journey. The trip in its entirety was comprehensively planned, and there was not much free time available to the pilgrims. The group was completely shielded from the outside world, and contact with (non-Hindu) Pakistanis was extremely limited. It was obvious that the Pakistani tour organizers had also put a great deal of effort into orchestrating the Indians' journey and that a team of people was involved in the organization. The course of the pilgrimage in Pakistan offered only short glimpses of Pakistani bazaars and villages in moments of transition from one vehicle to the other or while the group was entering one of the temples on their agenda. Such kinds of "tunnel-pilgrimages" are made possible through close collaboration between the Indian *aguā* and the local Pakistani tour organizers. These tight-knit arrangements are due to the same reason described above: Indian pilgrims are often anxious about traveling in Pakistan and welcome fully organized tours to maximize their level of security.

The type of shielded journey provided by *aguā* 1 and the Pakistani tour operators is reminiscent of Purewal's assessment of the India-Pakistan border (Purewal 2003). Purewal writes that the hinterlands of the geopolitical border—the "borderlands"—not only extend for several kilometers into each country but also permeate opportunities for interaction between Indians and Pakistanis inside the country. He writes that "borderlands are constituted not merely at geopolitical international borders, but also in day-to-day interactions and exchanges" (Purewal 2003, 542). In this case, the borderlands consist of checkpoints, administration offices, and police stations, all of which must be properly navigated by the Indian pilgrim groups. These borderlands might be malleable at times (depending on the connections of the Pakistani tour organizers) but can also be strict and extremely tightly regulated, constantly endangering the course of the pilgrimage. Thus, the "tunnel-pilgrimage" completed by *aguā* 1's groups is performed inside a border-network in which the actual crossing of the geopolitical border is but one step on the trip. For pilgrimage groups, the border is not only positioned at the margins of two nation states but also seems localized in multiple trials along the way, each of which has the potential to end their journey. Since every group must report at police stations throughout the journey and is repeatedly checked on their way to and from Hinglaj, they need particular local expertise and guidance. Usually the

Pakistani tour organizers were able to ensure a smooth process due to their even distribution of money among clerks and the police staff.[17]

It could also be argued that these borderlands actually begin before physically entering the foreign country; it begins with the visa application process. Thus, what can be said about the experience of Indian pilgrims in Pakistan also applies to a certain extent within India. Since the status of visas for Balochistan is legally ambiguous, and often they can only be attained through special channels and solid connections in consulates and embassies, the Pakistani borderlands start for Hinglaj pilgrims before they ever leave India. Many would-be pilgrims try to obtain visas for years, receiving repeated rejections. As is clear from the case of *aguā* 1 and his Pakistani partners, this situation opens up new opportunities for modern day *aguās* with the ability to distribute money through the right channels. Their work helps shorten bureaucratic processes and ultimately obtain visas. This logic of bribery and networking has become an important part of the pilgrimage in the era of modern-day nation states and is a lucrative business for Indian and Pakistani tour organizers.

Aguā 2 has also benefitted from the hurdles for Indian pilgrims to reach Hinglaj but has, by contrast, built his business upon a growing resentment among Indian pilgrims toward the type of costly and fully organized tours orchestrated by *aguā* 1. I came into contact with *aguā* 2 through some devotees I had met in India. They connected me with him, and we met a year later in Pakistan. *Aguā* 2 lives in a major Pakistani city and during my fieldwork was in contact with Indian devotees mainly from Gujarat. His services are not as professionalized as those of *aguā* 1 and other organizations, yet he has still managed to help a few groups reach the shrine over the past few years. His service is less expensive than the major tour organizers, who usually charge 40,000 to 60,000 Indian rupees, depending on the mode of transportation. A journey with the help of *aguā* 2 costs between 30,000 and 45,000 Indian rupees. However, since this guide operates only from Pakistan, he has limited connections in India and thus cannot be of much help in the visa application process. In spite of this deficit, many of the people I met when traveling with *aguā* 2 chose to do so because they were fed up with the work of major organizations that, in their eyes, worked only for the profit. As one pilgrim pointed out in 2011: "They are merely tour operators, they do religious tours and are only in it for the money." *Aguā* 2 organizes tours for up to seven people. The

17. On one occasion, I witnessed a huge sum of money extracted from one of the tour organizations at a new checkpoint that was recently erected along the route. Since the policemen were newly stationed there, they demanded a comparatively large sum of money to let the bus pass. The person operating the tour became increasingly upset and spent a long time on the phone trying to negotiate with the new patrol, but to no avail.

pilgrims from India have to arrange their visas on their own, or they hire Indian agents to assist them. After reaching Pakistan, they stay with *aguā* 2 in his private house, and for the trip to Hinglaj they rent a small bus. *Aguā* 2 is also able to help the visitors with the police registration and the dealings with the army on the road. Due to his locally influential business that, according to one of his friends, is also important for the military, *aguā* 2 has good connections to the police and military personnel on the way. Thus, although gaining his clientele from the perception among pilgrims that the main tour organizers are only in it for monetary gain, *aguā* 2 has also profited significantly from the obstacles that Indian pilgrims face in coming to Hinglaj.

Based on the cases described here, it can be said that in recent years, a separate "pilgrimage-market" has developed that thrives on the high prestige and the symbolic capital of the Hinglaj pilgrimage for many in India. People working for such tour operators must be well connected and skilled in the steady distribution of money to ensure the trip's smooth course. Successful modern day *aguās* possess good contacts for navigating the pilgrims through the bureaucratic borderlands in both countries. However, the political volatility between the countries is a double-edged sword; the livelihood of such tour operators depends on the political atmosphere between the two countries remaining tense as well as upon the appointing of certain known individuals into influential offices. After this excurse on transnational ritual journeys and Indian pilgrims, I will now come back to the Hinglaj shrine and recent developments there.

4.5 Jitˈnā takˈlīf utˈnā fāyˈdā—*More Pain, More Gain: A Tourist/Pilgrim Debate*

In the centuries prior to the pilgrimage's institutionalization in the mid-1980s, the journey was characterized by the strenuous path through the deserts of Sindh and Balochistan, the stops en route, and the kinesthetic experience. Later representations, especially after 2001, started to show more interest in Hinglaj as a location and not as a pilgrimage. As this began to happen, reflections on the walking practice and stories about the stops on the way declined in travelogues and oral narratives. Today, many visitors to the shrine debate the question as to what extent the salvific characteristics of Hinglaj have suffered due to these changes, particularly in light of the growing crowds now appearing at the shrine. The following passage is from a 2012 interview in which a visitor shares his concerns about the recent developments:

> [B]ecause of this long way people felt such bliss in their hearts. You could even call this bliss of the soul [*ātmik ānaṃd*], but now we don't

> get this kind of bliss anymore. The place that we used to visit is not there anymore. The way was so difficult, but we always had the name of the Goddess on our lips. I have no words for this bliss that we felt! Now there is everything here: water, food, dance, music, but the inner bliss is gone.

This visitor's words convey his longing for a lost past, a time when there was some kind of "real," "actual," or "genuine" religious experience possible at the shrine. This contrasts, in his opinion, with the current happenings inside the valley, where mere enjoyment replaces the experience of inner bliss (*ātmik ānaṃd*). In his assessment of the situation, two major changes are obvious: on the one side, the end of a long, arduous journey to the shrine that this visitor had made through the desert in 1989 and on the other side, an increasing factor of enjoyment, symbolized through dance and abundant food. In his opinion, these two developments changed the religious experience for the worse and robbed the visitors of the previously available "inner bliss." This interview is paradigmatic and represents only one among many dissident voices in discussions about changes in the valley. It is here where the gap between representations of travel to the shrine and the reality of current practices is particularly visible, and where imaginaries of hardship and the dangerous route to the shrine surface again and clash with the journey's newfound mobile practices. Notwithstanding the fact that Hinglaj is a particular case study, the debate bears similar characteristics to those of current discussions about the differences between tourism and pilgrimage (cf. Timothy and Olsen 2006; Urry 1995; Cohen 1988).

Doing research at Hinglaj, one encounters a broad array of motivations for people's visits to the valley. These reasons vary from mere curiosity or leisure to the fulfillment of an ancient family tradition. In my theoretical outlook, I have explained how this cacophony of voices—which conspicuously emerged after the shrine gained its central position for Pakistani Hinduism—led my attention to the strategies with which actors aim to organize this plurality of opinions. Similar to the notion of solidification, I also understand this permanent reference to some lost unity as an organization principle with the ultimate goal to incorporate the tradition's recent dislocation. Here, too, proper and improper practices are marked and separated. Today, visitors to the shrine often discredit the allegedly shallow motivations of others by saying that they came only for a picnic ("*bas, picnic manāne āte haiṃ*"). Certain visitors thereby create a hierarchical structure of motivations, drawing a line between themselves and the "picnicking" others. This divide between the "*picnic manānevāle*"—a term I understand as equivalent to "tourists"—and the

"devotees" was a prominent feature of many conversations I had with people in the valley and at other temples in Sindh. Certainly, no one ever perceived himself or herself or their group as "tourists," but many would lament the increasing shallowness of the journey and the simplistic motivations of others. The following is part of a conversation with a Sindhi Hindu who began visiting Hinglaj in the late eighties:

Q. You came here for the first time in 1989. So, tell me, what has changed?
A. Everything, how the people come and go, how they dress, their attitude . . . everything changed! The worst thing is that they forgot the name of the Mother!
Q. And such people keep coming to the shrine?
A. Yes! They constantly come. They turned it into a picnic, a sight where people just come and go as they please. It didn't use to be a picnic, it was just you and the Goddess. Now they even take baths in the ponds! They don't come for the *darśan*.

Here, one of the main reasons given for the spiritual decline at the shrine relates to the swelling crowd and the visitors' having forgotten the Goddess. For this interviewee, in the years he had been coming to the shrine, the site had changed from a spiritual place where people only meditated on the name of the Goddess into a gathering place for mere enjoyment. Interestingly, such notions of deterioration are rarely interpreted through the *kali yuga* (Skt.), the cosmic age of decay, given by many Hindus as the reason for spiritual degeneration all over the globe. I assume that due to the very recent changes at Hinglaj, *kali yuga* does not serve as an apt explanation for the gap between representation and current practice of the *yātrā*. Some visitors even report of a former blissful time, when their journey was rewarded by *ātmik ānaṃd*. The site's dramatic spiritual decline, therefore, needs to be rooted elsewhere.

Another visitor from Karachi had a similar story to tell. He claimed that the Goddess actually no longer resides at the shrine because she has become annoyed with the crowd herself. He added that if one wanted to meet her, one must climb up to Chaurasi, a two-and-a-half-hour ascent into the mountains, to a freshwater pond called Anil Kund where she had taken refuge. The area of Chaurasi is only accessible by way of a small walking path, and no paved road leads up to the place. This visitor connects the concepts of austerity and kinesthetic practice to its benefit; as in traditional representations, in his opinion, one must make a physical effort in order to catch a real glimpse of the Goddess and receive her blessing.

But in the eyes of many such individuals, it is not only the spiritual qualities that have suffered as a result of the swelling crowds. Another visitor lamented in a different conversation:

Q. So the actual [*sahī*] *yātrā* changed?
A. Yes, it used to be a *yātrā* once, but now it is not even a *yātrā* anymore! Only those who walk go on a real *yātrā*. And those who really want to do the pilgrimage, they are hindered by the crowds.
Q. How is that?
A. Before the Hingol River was flowing, but now it stopped. The water at Ashapura, the water at Kali Mata . . . everything dried out due to the crowds.
Q. How did that happen?
A. You know it is now a picnic place. Due to the coming and going, the littering, the usage of water for the children . . . all of these things caused the water to dry up.

In the opinion of this visitor, then, the crowds are also responsible for major ecological changes inside the valley. The masses hinder the "real" pilgrims from their spiritual experience and are even responsible for the drying up of sacred ponds.

Through these conversations, the impression emerges that the label of the *picnic manānevalā* or the "tourist" is used to capture a certain discontent with the current pilgrimage experience. It represents the projection of a deficit of some sort, creating the defining quality of an *other* at the shrine—a quality that is found only in fellow visitors and never in oneself. This label is filled with a variety of vague complaints used to express a general resentment about recent developments around the shrine. The term serves as a canvas upon which paintings of an allegedly superior past experience and, indeed, a lost unity are portrayed. As some visitors claim to remember a better time, *kali yuga*—which allegedly started in the fourth millennium BC—is not an apt concept to explain Hinglaj's spiritual decline. In this way, the "tourist" personifies the connection of the shrine to urban Pakistan and the accompanying changes at the site. Some of the visitors' words breathtakingly mirror the paragraph from *Marutīrtha Hiṃlāj* cited in Chapter 3, in which the author emphasizes the importance of the journey's kinesthetic experience.[18] These accounts

18. I add the paragraph here again: "How much merit do you get from the *darśan* of Vishvanath in Benaras if you are rushing to board a train to reach Kashi overnight, so that

attribute the pilgrimage's merit to the long and arduous path and deem physical demand and *tapasyā* critical components of the experience. Many visitors share the opinion that a "real" *darśan* of the Goddess cannot be attained in the valley anymore. However, there are rumors that it is still possible on the way to Anil Kund at a place that lays, unsurprisingly, at the end of a demanding path.

Michael Stausberg argues in his book about religion and tourism that there is a fairly blurry distinction between pilgrimages and tourist activities. For example, visits to churches are often embedded in cultural and city tours, while pilgrimages are sometimes embroidered with shopping stops and museum visits (Stausberg 2010). Although the church visit might only be part of the visitor's interest in the culture and history of a place, they may also take the opportunity to light a candle and say a little prayer for loved ones. Individual motivation is difficult to grasp in qualitative or quantitative research, and as Humphrey and Laidlaw argue, people impose various meaningful narratives onto ritualistic behavior on their own (Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994). Thus, arguments about what it means to be a pilgrim or a tourist already reflect an ideology of good and bad practice. But not only that. They are consistent with an implicit theory of pilgrimages according to which *tapasyā* and renunciation generate merit, purify the soul, and result in a deeper and more abiding spiritual experience. Such an attitude is, more or less, common to many pilgrimage traditions, and pilgrims' nostalgia is thoroughly consistent with local ideologies of pilgrimage as these react to modernization. Interesting in the Hinglaj case is that the line is drawn by local actors, such as *pujārīs*, organizers, and the visitors themselves in order to distinguish the serious from the non-serious—that is, the pilgrims from the tourists. In this way, the pilgrimage site at Hinglaj adds a new dimension to current discussions of what counts as "tourist" or "pilgrim" activity and reintroduces it with the distinction

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you can offer flowers and Bilva leaves on the head of Vishvanath, only to be back home the next day to return to your daily routine—only Mother Annapurna knows. But it can't be stressed enough that the hunger to acquire religious merit is not satisfied by that. On the other side, if you come back from Kedarnath and Badrinath after climbing mountains for two months, carrying old Tamarin and Isab Gol bottles on your back, hobbling with bruises on your body, then the satisfaction makes your chest swell with pride. Perhaps for that very reason, the glory of Kedarnath is considered bigger than the one in Vishvanath. The secret is indeed that the difficulties during the pilgrimage are also *tapas*, austerity. From austerity, one can get a glimpse of the Brahma. Therefore, it is said that austerity is Brahma [*tapohī brahma*]. If you mount a train for a pilgrimage and you come back without any physical toils, then you might see the pilgrimage place [*tīrtha*], but the austerity is left out. A pilgrimage route [*tīrthapath*] should be such a thing after which the mind [*man*], intelligence [*buddhi*], and the ego [*ahaṁkār*] together with the senses become burned [*dagdh*] and like gold" (Abadhut 1964, 154).

of the "*picnic manānevālā*" and the "*yātrī*." Similar to the initial discussion about "real" and "actual" parts of the tradition, the exclusion of the picnickers, too, serves as a way to organize and solidify the recent changes around the Hinglaj shrine.

This distinction, however, is not drawn along gritty lines of orthopraxy. The performance of certain rituals is not sufficient to serve as a marker of "seriousness," a quality that is denied the tourist. Devoted pilgrims might follow all the necessary rituals and *bhajans* (Hin. religious songs) in praise of the Goddess and still be seen by others as "*picnic manānevāle*." Instead of attaching the labels of "pilgrim" and "tourist" to particular qualities, it seems that certain visitors use these two descriptions in a manner that is void of any positive content but use them instead as a vehicle for expressing their resentment over the all-too-obvious gap between representations of Hinglaj and the actual practices at the shrine. The MCH plays an important and rather ambivalent role in this phenomenon. Over the past few years, the highway has been responsible for giving many people the chance to experience the shrine. On the one hand, the increasing number of visitors draws more attention to the Goddess and the various narratives at Hinglaj; on the other hand, such an accumulation of individuals, together with such smooth access to the shrine, contradicts themes of danger and exclusiveness in the pilgrimage experience as it is perpetuated in many narratives.

In light of these developments and the widely varying assortment of visitors to the shrine, it seems clear that there are no hard and fast guidelines for distinguishing "authentic" pilgrims from "picnic tourists." Thus, the "tourist" is merely the human embodiment of general resentment among certain visitors at the shrine. The rapid changes in recent years along with the consequent diminishing of the kinesthetic experience, characterized by reiteration of the grueling journey in oral traditions and literature, have led to a gap between the "ideal" picture and the modern reality of the pilgrimage. This gap must be filled with shape and meaning, a fantasy structure that has laid all the guilt upon the figure of the "tourist," thereby accounting for the lack of spiritual merit, which should allegedly be gained from the arduous and purifying journey that is known from so many historical sources.

4.6 Conclusion

With the construction of the MCH came not only the modernization of local transportation but also the reinvention of the walking practice to Hinglaj. As confirmed by Raj Kumar, one of the walking pilgrims from Narayanpur, the easy road along the highway was an incentive to change his annual pilgrimage

from Lal Shahbaz to Hinglaj Devi. Similarly, most of the walking pilgrims today began their practice of traveling on foot *after* the completion of the MCH. The infrastructure that developed along with the road, the easier access to water sources, and the reduced chance of getting lost on the way led to a revitalization of walking patterns. Whereas before the construction of the road, pilgrim groups needed a clearly appointed leader with substantial knowledge of the surroundings, today, a formalized hierarchy is no longer necessary. Modern-day walkers rearticulate common elements associated with the *yātrā*—such as the *chaṛī* that was once the centerpiece of ritualistic attention—and furnish them with new meaning. Instead of designating one person as macebearer—the *chaṛīdār*—today, for example, the Narayanpur pilgrims jointly push a cart that serves as the center of their ritual practice. Notwithstanding such changes, however, the walking *yātrīs* are still held in high esteem, and certain ritual paraphernalia, such as the cart pulled from Karachi, possess outstanding validity and power. In the case of the *rath*, this immense ritual significance was even employed as a tool for challenging the ticketing system introduced by the HSM.

The situation for devotees on the other side of the border, in India, presents a completely different picture: today, while in Pakistan, the shrine can be easily experienced, devotees in India must still rely on texts, videos, or the accounts of the few who have had the opportunity to cross the border. Many of the oral histories presented above can also be read from the perspective of restricted mobility and power. Thus, the kind of exclusivism surrounding the pilgrimage to Hinglaj—only known in Pakistan before the construction of the MCH—is still very much alive in India. The restricted mobility over the border caused by visa and financial limitations keeps the idea of a certain "special status" attached to the ritual journey vivid, a quality that is well known from many representations (texts and oral histories) of the pilgrimage. Thus, those who come back from Pakistan stand out as exceptional and are treated differently in their social environment. This climaxes in the transformation of certain Gujarati devotees' ritual status, those who by their pilgrimage to Hinglaj become initiated into the esteemed Kapri order and as *dev'ātmās* will not be burnt on the pyre as they would normally be, but instead will be buried in a *samādhi*, where their ancestors will supposedly worship them. This opportunity to change one's position within society and earn respect through the pilgrimage has also produced an industry on both sides of the border that organizes trips for substantial sums of money. In India, discourses on the Hinglaj pilgrimage draw power from the image of Pakistan as a savage country, further mystifying the journey and raising its symbolic capital. Due to the fact that there is currently no solid legal base for the journey into Balochistan,

the possibility of completing the transborder pilgrimage is highly tenuous and can quickly change in response to political circumstances between the two countries.

Recent developments have uncovered a gap between the discursive representations of the pilgrimage and the current practices at the shrine. As a result of these changes, visitors and organizations had to adopt new strategies for explaining the current ease of accessibility and newfound interest in the Balochistan temple. Hence the conspicuous gap had to be filled with the complete *other* of the traditional representations of practices at the shrine, which led to the notion of the "*picnic manānevālā*," or, as I iterated it, the "tourist." This label, though often cited as a reason for the spiritual decay of the shrine, under scrutiny reveals no particular content but rather encompasses the attitudes and ritual expectations of a wide cross-section of visitors to the shrine. Thus, the tourist is always some *other* that cannot be described by any positive set of characteristics; rather, the label represents certain participants' resentments toward particular aspects of the shrine today that are in dissonance with the picture painted by widespread oral traditions and publications. In this way, the tourist serves as a principle that helps to organize the tradition's recent dislocation. It stands as an obstacle between devotees at the shrine and the promised spiritual union they hope to achieve there.

5

Change and Perseverance

5.1 Introduction

Today, the tradition of Hinglaj finds itself at an intricate crossroads. On the one hand, it is rooted in an ancient history; on the other hand, the site has seen some of its most disruptive changes within only a few decades. The pilgrimage's institutionalization in the mid-1980s was followed by the completion of the Makran Coastal Highway (MCH) in the beginning of the millennium. This turned many of the tradition's former characteristics on their head and opened the door for creative engagements with its practices and mytho-historic narratives. Today, inventive actors shape the ritual journey, its various stops (Hin. *paṛāv*), and particularly the valley where the shrine is located, thereby contributing to the production of Hinglaj as a religious space. The following, therefore, will ask how discourses around Hinglaj and the pilgrimage stops *take place*; that is, how they produce paths, sign plates, statues, temples, wells, compound walls, or whole pilgrimage stops. For an apt approach to this important nexus between space and culture, I will critically engage with theories broadly associated with the "spatial-turn." This aims at achieving two goals: first, to analyze how Hinglaj is rendered as a meaningful religious space and, second, to emphasize the material aspect of the solidification theory through concepts of *spatialization*.

5.2 The Solidification of Religious Space

Briefly stated, the developments surrounding the study of space and place since the 1980s—the so-called spatial turn—can be summed up as the rejection of any stable Euclidean entity and its replacement with the notion of space as continually being produced (Cresswell 2004; Keith and Pile 1993; Urry 1995). Space is now perceived as a "product of interrelations," "coexisting

heterogeneity," and "always under construction" (Massey 2005, 9). To render this differently: space evolves as social reality through interactions and practices and so turns into space(s) of meaning. This also implies that space loses its universal character, allowing different groups and actors to create spaces according to their own needs and conceptions. For Massey, such considerations first and foremost mean that the "spatial is political" (Massey 2005, 9). Similar to what has been said above about how the solidification of the tradition is the outcome of a political struggle and hegemony, so theories of space, too, insist on the political nature of the production of space.

One detailed examination of the production of space as a political practice is found in the work of Henri Lefebvre (2012), who significantly influenced the "spatial turn." For Lefebvre, "space" (*l'espace*) is not merely a three-dimensional area in which life happens but rather is something more complex, produced out of representations and discourses about space. Lefebvre describes space as an arena of struggle where production and reproduction of "spatial phenomena," like land, territories, and sites, happen (Urry 1995, 25). Thus, Lefebvre's concept of *l'espace* can be understood, as Shields puts it, as a "*spatialisation* of social order" and a way in which "abstract structures such as 'culture' become concrete practices and arrangements in space" (Shields 1998, 155). Space, according to Lefebvre, is not a stable product but a simultaneous process of production (Shields 1998, 155). Therefore, developments that alter space must be understood through the dialectical relationship between spatial arrangements (like topographical characteristics) and influential actors (like social organizations) active at the site. The ongoing activities of religious organizations—in this case, for example, the HSM—thus appear as producing space, but also as a reaction to already produced space. Triggered by fairly recent developments around Hinglaj, projects like constructing pilgrimage shelters and bridges emerge at the nexus of environment and individual and organizational efforts that together solidify social order into social space at Hinglaj.

But how exactly does this process of *spatialization* work? For the purpose of understanding different agents in the production of space, Lefebvre describes three "formants" or "moments" that are mutually interdependent and form a "three-way dialectic" (Shields 1998, 120). This part of Lefebvre's work, in which he describes the three moments of spatial production, however, was not fully conceptualized by Lefebvre himself and therefore is widely discussed by scholars. Merrifield points this out when he writes:

> Unfortunately—or perhaps fortunately—[Lefebvre] sketches this [spatial triad] out only in preliminary fashion, leaving us to add our own

> flesh, our own content, to rewrite it as part of our own chapter or research agenda. (Merrifield 2006, 109)

Therefore, I will present these three modes, which have been interpreted in many—and sometimes contradictory—ways (Schmid 2008; Shields 1998; Urry 1995), in close relation to my case study at Hinglaj. This will naturally result in my own interpretation and thus rearticulation of Lefebvre's concepts. It is undisputed, however, that none of these formants can be conceptualized separately; each gains its meaning only through its relationship to the other two.[1] The spatial triad also does not possess a certain *telos*, which eventually results in a Hegelian "synthesis." Rather, these moments "exist in interaction, in conflict or alliance with each other" (Schmid 2008, 33). Hence, there is no ultimate product but only periods where one or the other of these moments prevails in communication with the others. In this way, the separation of spatiality into three different logics has useful heuristic value but eventually collapses into one production of space.

I start with the use of the term "spatial practice" (Lefebvre 2012, 38) to refer to repeated acts that, over the course of time, transform the space in which they are performed and thereby change the landscape and the topography of Hinglaj. These practices include ritual performances but also quotidian acts, such as the cleaning of the valley and general patterns of mobility. In general, spatial practices refer to repeated performances occurring at the site, or sometimes en route to the site, that contribute to the transformation of space into "human space" (Shields 1998, 162). Due to the regularity of events at the shrine—four major festivals annually—practices and the resulting changes follow a certain rhythm. For example, in the days before the April *melā*, the Hingaj Sheva Mandai (HSM) is busy refurbishing the place by repairing roads, painting images, and so forth. After the festival, there is much to clean, repair, and reconstruct. The spatial practices at Hinglaj, therefore, consist of the regular movement of crowds but also the efforts by the organizations in charge to adapt the locale to these movements.

These spatial practices are closely related to what Lefebvre calls in the next step of his theoretical framework "representations of space" (Lefebvre 2012, 38). These are the logical, conceptual forms of the knowledge of space that are directly linked to its production. Here, the work of architects, city planners,

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1. This, naturally, leads to an indeterminacy of these three moments. But it is not my aim to present a clear-cut taxonomy, explaining the function of religious sites. I want to show the intrinsic dynamics involved in the production of Hinglaj as a religious site.

and cartographers becomes important. These representations of space directly impact spatial practices since it is they, often in relation to financial capital, that help to produce those practices. However, this does not imply that there is any kind of chronological succession between these two. Spatial practices and representations of space stand in a dialectical relationship without any particular sequential arrangement. In the case of Hinglaj, this is the realm of the engineers and architects of the Balochi government, but the various organizations at the shrine (first and foremost the HSM) aiming to make the place more "visitor friendly" also play a role. At this level of the production of space, only a few actors are visible, and therefore it must be particularly scrutinized through the lens of power and hegemony. While the spatial practices include actual movement around the shrine, this is the conceptual level at which the shrine and the valley emerge on the map or become conceived as a religious and non-religious space by the temple organization.

The last moment of this triad and the most diversely interpreted is that of "representational spaces" (Lefebvre 2012, 39) or "spaces of representation" (Schmid 2008, 37). Here, spatial descriptions are associated with certain characteristics and attributes, such as—for example—"coming from the 'wrong side of town' " as a classification of one's social identity (Shields 1991, 55). They are the location of social "fantasy" (Glynos and Howarth 2007), "myth" (Laclau 1990), or "mythohistorical knowledge" (Babb 2004) and establish coherency between place and group. Due to the wide array of possibilities of how a religious site can be interpreted, representational spaces produce meaning and consistency through exclusion and emotional investment. In this way, they work similarly to the aforementioned truth-claims (or nodal points), which establish an apparent natural link between a site's material shape and its performing actors. It is in this realm that pilgrimage sites acquire the potential to become the *axis mundi* of a people—a process, as we have seen before, that builds on the rejection of other possible options. Such spaces of representation, therefore, might also compete with each other, at times even resulting in violent struggles over their interpretation. The destruction of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya (Uttar Pradesh, India) by nationalist Hindu zealots in 1992 is but one example of clashing imaginaries of religious space that triggered communal violence. In short, spaces of representation encompass a variety of mytho-historical explanations and practices that give meaning to the relationship between spatiality and community. It comes as no surprise, then, that Merrifield wrote: "[spaces of representation] don't involve too much head: they're felt more than thought" (Merrifield 2006, 110). It is this emotional charge that makes spaces of representation an important feature of religious sites.

For the sake of clarity and to avoid confusion between "spatial practice," "representations of space," and "spaces of representation," in the following I render these three formants as *practice, conceptualization,* and *imaginary of space*, respectively. Through the use of such practices, conceptualizations, and imaginaries, spaces turn into meaningful religious sites or even significant symbols for a community where ideals of religious identity are performed. At such places, a particular costume might be worn, a certain diet might be followed, or a specific behavioral norm might be adhered to. In this way, influential religious places articulate a kind of gravitational pull on religious ideals, attracting and reflecting religious imaginaries at the same time. I already mentioned that at religious sites, the moment of the imaginary of space frequently obtains a crucial position. Let me briefly elaborate on this point before turning to the journey's individual stops.

5.3 *The Site's Air of Permanency:* Svayaṃbhū

Religious sites often connect themselves to mythological times and cosmic circles. Their authenticity might be linked to a primordial age, which connects the mythical with the present time. Meanings, however, constantly change and become rearticulated as they adapt to new political or topographical developments. A spring of holy water drying up—as I will show in this chapter—or a pilgrimage place becoming overcrowded may alter a place in the eyes of those who attribute meaning to it. Such disruptive events can undermine the aforementioned aura of stability and permanence often attached to a religious space. As Bremer puts it,

> places regarded as sacred often have an air of permanency that transcends the contingencies of human mortality; the sacred places of a religious tradition will survive long after individual religious adherents have passed away. In fact, sacred sites serve as an enduring symbol of, and orientation for, the continuance of the religious community itself. (Bremer 2006, 30)

In the case of Hinglaj, but also in regard to many other Hindu-religious sites in South Asia, this "continuance" is represented through the concept of *svayaṃbhū* (Hin.), of being "self-existent" or having "self-generated." The perpetuation of this notion requires providing the place with an "air of permanency," which, at the same time, also calls for opposing a place's dynamic becoming. Thus, contingencies and changes at religious places undermine not just imaginaries of continuity but also the codification of

particular rituals and practices by organizations supporting the notion of durability.

Svayaṃbhū is an important feature of many *tīrthas* (Urban 2011); it implies a divine presence in natural manifestations such as particular landscapes or, on a smaller scale, stones understood to be the Goddess's image (often in the form of a *piṇḍa*, round stones found by devotees at particular places in the landscape) or Shiva's phallus. But the concept of *svayaṃbhū* not only relates to certain objects but also can be linked to whole areas, as in the case of the Hinglaj Valley, the area surrounding Chandrakup volcano, or even the whole desert, considered the home of the Devi. The *svayaṃbhū* aspect connects a place to a cosmic time cycle and to particular gods and goddesses within this realm. Through this connection, a place is incorporated into the mytho-historic narrative, as with the story of the *yātrā* by the God Rama (Chapter 3). Sircar writes that the earliest such *sthāns* were understood as natural representations of the gods and goddesses. Pools and water springs were associated with the reproductive organs of the Devi, and hill chains were imagined as her breasts (cited in Erndl 1993, 35). The Hinglaj Valley—with its springs, ponds, and caves—certainly offers a number of such elements that can be said to have spontaneously appeared. Gopal Maharaj, the only permanent priest at the Hinglaj temple, often talked about the shrine in this way and repeatedly emphasized this aspect of its history. In one interview with Dawn, a Pakistani news channel, he said:

> Every temple in the world is constructed with bricks and stones, but if you look at the roof of this place, you will realize that it has naturally generated. No one constructed it.[2]

Inside the temple, the *sanctum*, an oblong stone with some raised mounds atop it, along with a small rift in the mountain wall called the *garbha* (Hin. womb), are also considered to be *svayaṃbhū*. Although my research indicates that the foundational parts of the *sanctum* are indeed of undefined age, I do not infer that this representation of the Goddess was not subject to change as well. The same is true of the tunnel underneath the *mūrti*. Similar to the ways the HSM has changed the face of the valley since the turn of the twenty-first century, it is evident from travelogues and photographs that over the course

2. "*Duniyā kā har mandir banāyā jātā hai, īṃṭoṃ se patth'roṃ se, agar āp is kī chat dekheṃ yah qud'ratī banāyā huā hai, kisī ne banāyā nahīṃ hai*" (Gopal Maharaj December 2010). See Schaflechner (2011, 29:00).

of the past one hundred years, various devotees visiting the valley must have appropriated the shrine and the image, all according to their own religious conceptions. Due to such findings, I believe it necessary to conceptualize the statue and the whole valley of Hinglaj as a constantly produced and reproduced space. Yet the HSM and visitors at Hinglaj often downplay any construction work at the temple, especially if it affects the image. Since the place is said to have evolved on its own, any kind of man-made alteration in and around it effectively undermines the idea of its authenticity. Alterations bearing directly upon the shape of the Goddess's image inside the temple, in particular, are extremely contentious. Such resistance to man-made changes relates to the notion of *svayaṃbhū*, the symbolic and even financial capital of which should not be underestimated.

This friction is best illustrated by a situation taken from my fieldwork. One day while researching the construction and the age of the temple, I began inquiring about the image of the Goddess. A few days later, Gopal Maharaj, whom I had met during almost all of my visits to Hinglaj and who had always been a very fine guide and conversation partner, approached me and told me that I must stop my research on the shape of the image and the *garbha*, the tunnel underneath the *sanctum*. Upon asking why, he told me that the Goddess had come to him in a dream and instructed him to tell me not to conduct any further inquiries on the topic because my work was disturbing her sleep. I had shared my findings about significant alterations at the temple with Gopal some time before, especially around the tunnel. Gopal insisted that most of the changes were merely superficial in nature and only served to help the visitors in their worship. An old photograph in particular, discussed below (Stein 1943), provoked Gopal's (and others) emotions. This divine intervention put an end to my research into the *sanctum sanctorum*. Luckily, this happened at a time when I had already gathered ample on-site material.

This incident is a good example of the contention arising from notions of permanence and visible change inside the valley of Hinglaj. With the help of the aforementioned triad, the notion of *svayaṃbhū* can clearly be located within Lefebvre's format of imaginary of space (Lefebvre 2012). The aura of permanence attached to this concept connects the tradition to an endless, eternal, and therefore "true" Goddess fellowship, which devotees today are able to participate in. Naturally, the importance of this moment needs to influence the other two formats—that is, spatial practices and conceptualizations of space. Under this aspect, it makes sense that, for example, construction work at the shrine is backgrounded or that the promise of engaging with a "real" or "self-generated" *tīrtha sthān* is causing people to go on the long journey to the Balochistan shrine.

Through this interdependency of practice, conceptualization, and imaginary of space, I will be able to analyze the material aspects of solidification and show how the shrine, the valley, and the pilgrimage stops (Hin. *paṛāv*) along the way to Hinglaj developed over time. Because there is no end to this production of space but rather only stages of contestation and decontestation between the three modes, I think it is more accurate to speak of the shrine's (and the annexed route's) *spatiality* rather than only its religious *space*. Due to the tradition's fairly recent dislocation, this work is limited to providing a snapshot of current developments around Hinglaj where ritual performances, construction work, and mytho-historical imaginaries influence each other and increasingly solidify into a coherent narrative, only to change yet again in time.

5.4 The Halting Places on the Pilgrimage

While previous chapters dealt with the representation of the journey and the rearticulation of certain themes of mobility and austerity among pilgrims, at this point, I want to focus on the places and different localities that connect the pilgrimage, thereby forming a sacred or, as Eck calls it, an "imagined landscape" (Eck 1998). These *paṛāv* (Hin. halting place, camp, stage of a march) or *maqām* (Urd. dwelling, station, halt) thus do not stand in isolation but rather form a part of a wider pilgrimage network that connects mytho-historic narratives with landscape. The meaning of each has been repeatedly redefined over time, resulting in an assortment of different features and names found at particular stops. There is an abundance of such *paṛāvs* throughout the literature and in the oral traditions of different communities relating to Hinglaj. While some stops have gained increasing importance over the years (primarily those closer to the temple), others have lost significance or even slipped into complete oblivion. Due to the increased interest in Hinglaj as a religious site, this chapter will pay particular attention to the development of the valley into a confined Hindu religious site in the Islamic Republic.

Jethamalani writes that thirteen *paṛāv* and twenty-three places for *pūjā* (Skt. ritual worship) once comprised the traditional pilgrimage from Karachi to Hinglaj (Jethamalani 1994, 10).[3] He adds that today, pilgrims' time constraints have reduced this number of stops to just three *paṛāv*, which contain seven *pūjās*. These changes in the selection of stops also relate to

3. Chhabria names thirteen stops and twenty-five places of worship (Chhabria 2000, 56–57), while Jareca mentions thirteen stops and twenty-four places of worship (Jareca n.d., 104–106). Kshatriya documents eighteen stops and twenty-four *pūjā* places (Kshatriya 2005, 76).

infrastructural developments in the area. Here, too, we find that the network of stops and practices changed because of the construction of a road. In the early 1970s, the RCD Highway N 25 connecting Quetta with Karachi was completed. In the 1960s, the road had already been constructed up to the city of Bela, several kilometers north of Uthal, the present capital of the province (Khan Baloch 1970, 125). This shortened the journey significantly since pilgrims were able to drive as far as Liari, a village in Balochistan from where they started their journey into the desert on camels or off-road vehicle. The construction of the N 25 changed the sequence of stops and also helped a small Hindu temple in Liari village to gain more importance as the new starting point for the *yātrā*. Such developments, however, came at the expense of stops located before Liari, like the Guru-Shishya *paṛāv*, which almost completely disappeared from the pilgrimage network.[4] The following list shows the three *paṛāv* and seven *pūjās* to the west of Liari, according to the description of Jethamalani in 1994:

1. Khari Nadi with two *asthāns* (Urd.; here: places for *pūjā*)
   a. Khari Nadi, where people take a bath in the ocean and worship Rama
   b. Chandrakup, a mud volcano that is worshipped as an embodiment of Shiva
2. Aghor River, also with two *asthāns*
   a. The River Aghor, where the ceremony of the *jane'o* (Urd. sacred thread) is performed and children's heads are shaved
   b. Ganesh, a place on the way to Ashapura
3. Ashapura (also Ashapuri)
   a. Here, a pilgrim's own chosen God or Goddess is worshipped (Urd. *iśṭādev*)
   b. Kali Mata, where some pilgrims offer black goats and others offer coconuts
   c. Hinglaj temple, where the *yagya* (Urd.; from Skt. <*yajña*> "sacrifice"), *havan* (Urd.), and the *darśan* (Urd.) of Hinglaj are performed (Jethamalani 1994, 12)

Jethamalani describes the route from the perspective of a local (Karachi) Khatri devotee of Hinglaj. Many of the stops he mentions in his book are not

4. For accounts describing this stop, see Hart (1839, 84–85); Abadhut (1964, 55–56); Shastri (1977, 24–25). Today, only a very small portion of pilgrims to Hinglaj have heard of this stop, and I have not met anyone who was able to identify its exact location.

found in other traditions, where alternative *paṛāv* seem to be more important. So, for example, the *pūjā* for the God Ganesha is not mentioned in Shastrī's or Abadhut's work on Hinglaj; these two authors emphasize other stops and landmarks.

In his account, Colonel Wilford, mentioned in Chapter 3, states that there were three different routes for proceeding from the coast town of Sonmiani to several kilometers north of the River Hab: one by sea, one following the shore, and one inland. The inland route is likely the way taken by the protagonists in Shastri and Abadhut's novels since Wilford mentions that this path passes by a memorial for a deceased "Jogi, or Dervish" and his disciple (Wilford 1851, 243), and a similar memorial is described by each of the two authors in their writing.[5] This description of the Guru-Shishya *paṛāv* is almost completely forgotten today. Wilford also describes other areas and stops that do not appear in any travelogues or oral traditions. One example is "Macar's bone" (probably from Sin. *machu* or Hin. *macch* "fish"), believed by pilgrims to be a whale's bone dug into the earth by some holy man to stop the surf from reaching beyond this point (Wilford 1851, 252). Another is the area of "Camala Devi," which pilgrims cross quickly, in just a few hours, since there they are not allowed to spit, blow their nose, or throw anything else on the ground. According to the belief of devotees, the Goddess would punish any pilgrim who dared to do so with leprosy (Wilford 1851, 257).[6] These places en route show the plurality of mytho-historic narratives attached to the land and the Goddess Hinglaj. The diverse descriptions and enumerations of important stops found in texts and oral traditions find their roots in the pilgrimage's long-standing lack of far-reaching institutionalization.

For centuries, it was the role of local Nath community members to lead the pilgrims along these *paṛāv* to Hinglaj (Abadhut 1964, 1). With the reinstitutionalization of the *yātrā* in the mid-1980s, however, this became the work of the HSM, which ultimately chose to highlight certain stops along the way and leave others out. This process is easily traceable through a study of the advertisements for the pilgrimage, which are printed by the HSM and describe the pilgrimage route to be followed in the year of publication. These posters, which, since 1986 have been annually distributed in the temples of major Pakistani cities and in rural Sindh, demonstrate the extent

5. Cf. Abadhut (1964, 55); Shastri (1977, 24–25).

6. A similar place is mentioned by Hart, who describes an area which he has been told is named "*sath durwazu*" (probably from Sin. "seven doors") and which contains the private rooms of the Goddess. To spit on or defile this area is considered a serious transgression (Hart 1839, 91).

to which a developing infrastructure and institutionalization have influenced the change and even production of stops on the pilgrimage to Hinglaj. This is exemplified by the Khari Nadi *paṛāv*, a stop at the River Khari: of the three remaining stops of the pilgrimage in 1994 described by Ashok Jethamalani, another as the halting place at the River Khari. According to him, it is there that pilgrims bathe in the Arabian Sea and worship the God Rama. It is important to note that when Jethamalani published his book in 1994, transportation to the shrine was arranged mainly by the HSM. It is thus likely that many visitors in the 1990s visited that stop since at that time, the Khari *paṛāv* constituted a decisive part of the ritual journey, visible on the HSM's pilgrimage program. In that same year, however, the HSM stopped announcing the Khari stop, and the *paṛāv* vanished from the advertisements. According to one official, this was due to the fact that, by then, pilgrims were already traveling in off-road vehicle and no longer needed to bathe in the ocean to feel refreshed. There are also no recent travelogues mentioning this stop. The HSM's decision to leave it out of its organized tours and its absence from the announcement sheets led to the *paṛāv* falling into relative obscurity as an element of the *yātrā*. Throughout the entire course of my fieldwork at the shrine—including hundreds of interviews about the *yātrā*, the sacred valley, and the shrine—not a single person mentioned the Khari stop or the Rama *pūjā*.

These examples show the contingency in naming, inclusion, and exclusion of certain stops in the pilgrimage route to Hinglaj. Only within the past few decades, mainly through increasing numbers of publications and the work of the HSM, has a pilgrimage network that seeks to unify but also rearticulate the different routes to the shrine started to solidify. With this perspective in mind, I will describe a set of stops frequently encountered in literature and oral histories. This list is not exhaustive, but at least it provides a sense of the relationship between landscape, route, and the individual halting places in the area. I describe the stops beginning from Karachi—with the exception of the important temple at Thatta—notwithstanding the fact that there are many important places of worship between Thatta and Cape Monz (Wilford 1851). The following stops, however, encompass the main places of worship today. The given sequence follows the main stops approaching Hinglaj from the eastern side.

5.4.1 The Mata Bhawani Temple in Makli

This Devi temple is located in Makli, near the Makli hill sites, close to the city of Thatta. Historically, it is linked to names such as Ashapura (Briggs 1938), Hinglaj (Lakhavat 2011), or Bhavani Devi (found at inscriptions in the temple),

depending on the religious affiliation of the community asked (Boivin 2007, 35). An inscription on one of the southeastern walls claims that the temple (or parts of it) were constructed in 1872. Ansari writes that a group of Yogis placed an idol of the Goddess at this place around 1300 CE (Ansari 2001, 21). He also adds that Thatta once had two *akhāṛās* (Hin. here "place of assembly")—a smaller one for common pilgrims and a large one for the aristocracy on their way to Hinglaj. Apparently, lost inscriptions from these *akhāṛās* commemorated the journeys of several kings and aristocrats over several centuries (Ansari 2001, 22). People at the temple today claim that it was constructed by members of the Patel community from Gujarat.

Today, the site is generally known in Sindh as the Mata Bhawani temple, and it enjoys the status of one of the most significant places of worship east of Karachi for Hinglaj pilgrims. The temple is home to an annual festival in October but also sees many visitors subsequent to the main festivals at Hinglaj. This exchange of pilgrims bears witness to the strong link between the temple in Thatta and the shrine in Balochistan. It is said that pilgrims should go to this temple before they set off for Hinglaj but also visit it once more after their return (Ansari 2001, 22). The importance of Thatta as an integral stop on the pilgrimage to Hinglaj indicates the significant number of pilgrims following the southeast route, coming from Gujarat via the Rann of Kutch. The route retains its importance today notwithstanding the fact that the main starting point for the *yātrā* has now been shifted to Karachi or the village of Liari.

The Mata Bhawani temple is also famous for a particular necklace made there from limestone and called *ṭhum'rā*. Tradition has it that Hinglaj was very fond of the Nath community, especially of Guru Gorakhnath. So the Goddess waited day after day in Thatta for Gorakhnath to come to meet her, and, in anticipation of his arrival, each day she cooked *khic'ṛī* (Hin.), a dish made of rice and pulses (the edible seeds of various leguminous plants, such as chickpeas and lentils). But Gorakhnath did not come, and so every day she poured the untouched *khic'ṛī* on one particular place so that the food started piling up there. When Gorakhnath finally arrived at Thatta after twelve years, he was very pleased to see all the food that Hinglaj had prepared in anticipation of his arrival, and so he changed it all into a pile of limestone. Gorakhnath then declared that from that day forward, anyone who returned from Hinglaj wearing a necklace of these limestone pebbles would be freed from the fetters of this world (Lakhavat 2011, 35).

Another story also explains the creation of the *ṭhum'rā* seeds. Shiva and Parvati were on their way to Hinglaj, and they stopped for a rest in the area of Thatta. Shiva went out into the jungle and Parvati was cooking *khic'ṛī* for

him. While Shiva was away, a demon approached Parvati and tried to attack her, but Parvati killed the demon with a trident. When Shiva came back from his trip to the jungle, he saw the defiled fireplace and the food, which was now full of the demon's blood, and he told Parvati to throw away the *khic'ṛī*. Thus, the grains of the food turned into the limestone found at Thatta today (Briggs 1938, 104–105).

5.4.2 The Nagnath *Akhāṛā* in Karachi

The Nagnath *akhāṛā* (Hin. a courtyard or an assembly place for a *paṃcāyat*, musicians, or *sādhus*) played an important role for the *yātrā* until the partition of the subcontinent and the subsequent relocation of many Hindu families from the city of Karachi to India (Zamindar 2008; Hasan 2009). In the days before the separation, this area belonged to the Nath *saṃpradāy* (Hin. a religious sect) and served as the main gathering place for pilgrims coming from all over British India intending to peregrinate to Hinglaj. Hopeful pilgrims often waited several weeks at the *akhāṛā* until a group of twenty to twenty-five people had assembled and camel drivers hired from Las Bela had arrived. Originally built for the *sādhus* of the Nath community, the place turned into a refuge for beggars and the homeless in the 1940s (Abadhut 1964, 1). Abadhut also mentions that the Naths started small businesses around the *akhāṛā* since they could not make a living solely from guiding pilgrims to Hinglaj (Abadhut 1964, 1).

Nowadays, the Nagnath *akhāṛā* in Karachi is closed and, it is not possible to enter the main building anymore. Nearby on an old confined compound lies the Jagnath *akhāṛā*, which, according to local residents, was once a part of the Nagnath *akhāṛā*. It still shelters an active Hinglaj Mata temple where the *chaṛīs* (Hin. stick) for the pilgrimage are kept in a corner closet. The Hinglaj effigy inside is a rough image, made of stone and without any elaborate ornamentation. It shows the Goddess in her eight-armed form. On the inner temple wall is an image of a snake, a representation of one of the Goddess's many forms. While the Nagnath *akhāṛā* served as a shelter for the devotees to assemble and organize food and camels, it was in the Jagnath *akhāṛā* that the *aguā*, the leader of the pilgrimage group, accepted the *chaṛī* before the group set off. The local priest at the Jagnath *akhāṛā* remembers that in his father's time, many pilgrims would come to this temple and begin their journey by taking one of the *chaṛīs* brought from the valley of Hinglaj. Each stick was cut from a tree in the Hinglaj Valley and had the power to protect the group on their dangerous journey, provided they properly worshipped it on the way. This practice of

starting the pilgrimage at one of the *akhāṛās* has generally ceased, with the Swaminarayan temple on M. A. Jinnah Road now serving as the main gathering spot for Hinglaj pilgrims in Karachi. Notwithstanding this change among the majority of devotees, however, one group—the pilgrims from Narayanpur mentioned in Chapter 4—still treats the Jagnath temple as the journey's main starting point.

5.4.3 The Liari Village

The small village of Liari is situated in the Las Bela district, west of the N 25 RCD Highway connecting Karachi to Quetta, the capital of Balochistan. The village is home to only a few hundred people but for several reasons has become the pilgrimage's main starting point over the past fifty years (Jethamalani 1994, 7). In older travelogues, Liari and its Goddess temple do not play any role, and neither Hart nor Abadhut mention it in their accounts. Shastri also does not mention the place, writing instead that the ritual journey begins at the Hab River, where the pilgrims say an oath and put on an ochre-colored piece of cloth (Shastri 1977, 11). Nor does Wilford allude to the village or its temple, in spite of describing three different routes to Hinglaj (Wilford 1851). According to local oral histories, however, Liari served as the first *paṛāv* for many Lohanas from the city of Bela who approached Hinglaj from the north. Since all of the sources mentioned above traveled to Hinglaj from Karachi, it comes as no surprise that they would not have considered the stop.

Judging from these historical accounts, it is evident that Liari was included in the southern route only fairly recently. This supposition is also supported by Samaur, who writes that pilgrims used to travel the road via Sonmiani, but currently people take the route via Liari (Samaur 1999, 504f.). It was the construction of the N 25 between Karachi and Quetta in the 1960s that transformed Liari into an important site, even for pilgrims coming from the south traveling over Karachi. Liari was located in a strategic position, close to the N 25 and at the beginning of the west-leading desert road, rendering the village an important organizational stop. At this juncture the means of transportation changed and scattered groups traveled to Hinglaj on camels or in off-road vehicle. Thus, at Liari, people exited the comfortable highway and rested for a while before beginning the grueling journey across the rough desert (see Fig. 5.1).

Today, pilgrims coming from the south also put on the ochre-colored piece of cloth in Liari, which previously was done at the River Hab. This cloth, called the *bhag'vā* (Hin.; in Urd. *bhagvā*), was tied around the head or worn around

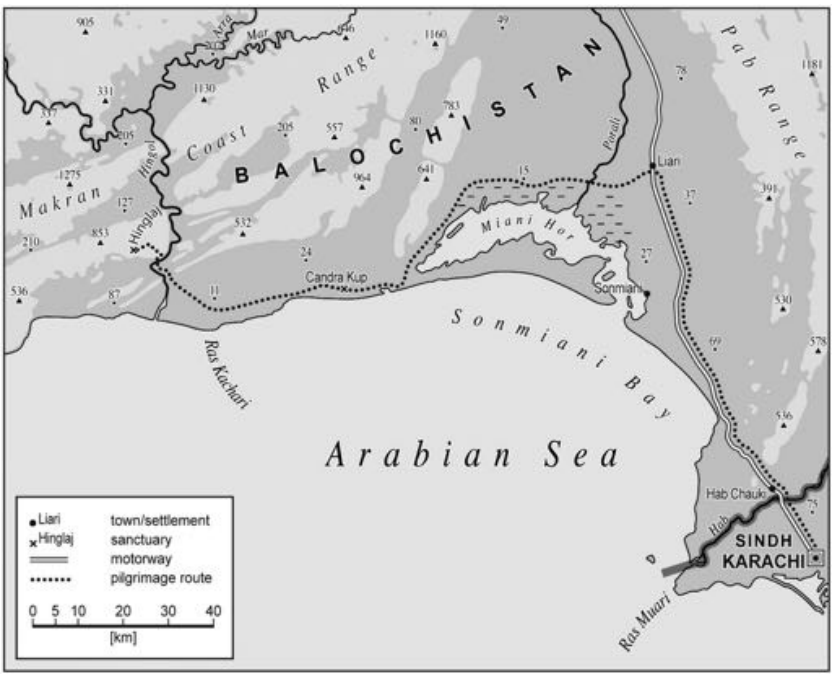

FIGURE 5.1 The journey from Liari village after the construction of a road between Quetta and Karachi

the neck (Khatri 1973, 19).[7] It assured the *yātrīs* the Goddess's protection from wild animals or other obstacles along the way (Jethamalani 1994, 7). In the words of Virsimal Dewani, one of the main HSM pilgrimage organizers:

> The *bhag'vā* means that the pilgrims become Yogis and ascetics at this place [Liari]. When they wear the *bhag'vā*, they leave the mundane world behind. It is actually a sign of the *faqīrs* [. . .]. Here their pilgrimage starts—this is their first stop [*paṛāv*]. This means that they now focus completely on the pilgrimage and that they are protected from animals like snakes and scorpions [. . .]. By wearing the *bhag'vā* they receive a protective covering [*kavac lag jātā hai*].[8]

Today during the *phālgun/caitra* festival, this traditional *bhag'vā* is also worn in the form of an ochre-colored cap, which is sold by locals around the Liari

7. For a visual impression of this practice in 2010, see Schaflechner (2011, 17:50).

8. For the whole interview, see Schaflechner (2011, 17:50).

temple. Inside the Hinglaj Valley, this *bhag'vā* tradition was rearticulated between 2009 and 2013, when the HSM introduced a new way of dispensing tickets to the temple. Before 2009, there had been another ticketing system in place that, according to members of the HSM, had proven very easy for visitors to bypass. This led the organization to introduce nontransferable, ochre-colored plastic wristbands, which they called the *bhag'vā paṭṭī*. Many visitors were upset with this procedure and mocked the way in which the HSM attempted to connect the selling of tickets to the traditional practice of the *bhag'vā*. In response to the protests, in 2013, the HSM decided to abolish the ticketing system (for more details see Chapters 4 and 6).

In 2001, after the MCH had been constructed up to the Hingol River, Liari lost its functional and strategic position as the last major settlement before the desert journey. In spite of this fact, the HSM, whose members consist almost entirely of Lohanas from Las Bela, still advertises the Liari *paṛāv* as the starting point of the journey, which is evident from the announcement posters of the pilgrimage. Liari occupies an important place within the Lasi Lohana tradition and is now—at a time when the HSM is seeking to detach the pilgrimage from its mere sectarian roots—solidifying as a necessary stop on the pilgrimage. Moreover, financial advantages in the form of donations and proceeds from the sale of coconuts and ochre-colored cloth caps at the Liari stop certainly also plays a major role in the HSM's attempt to keep the *paṛāv* a significant visiting site.

Within another corpus of narratives concerning the shrine, Liari is also associated with the story of Lalu Jasraj (Hart 1839, 80),[9] the *chaṛīdār* (Hin. stickbearer) of Rama and his entourage. However, I came across this narrative mainly during my conversations with Dayaram Kapri from Gujarat (introduced in Chapter 4), who claimed that this reference is found in the *Hiṃgulā Purāṇ*. Unfortunately, I was not able to locate the story there, and only a few of my other informants in Pakistan mentioned this myth about Liari, so it is questionable how widespread it is outside the Gujarati Kapri community.

5.4.4 The Mud Volcano Chandrakup

The mud volcano Chandrakup (from Hin. *caṃdrakūp* "the moon well") (sometimes shortened to "Kup"), also called Chandragup (from Sin. *chandra gūp* "the

9. Hart's description allows for an association of the mythological figure Lalu Jasraj with the shrine of Mango Pir in Karachi. Notwithstanding the fact that Hart calls the saint "Peer Moogha," knowing that it is said that Lalu Jasraj stayed at a hermitage near the hot springs makes the association possible (Hart 1839, 80).

FIGURE 5.2 Pilgrims descending Chandrakup. View toward the south crater, 2012

moon's mud") (cf. Motyani 2011, 281; Stein 1943, 202), is one of the stops en route to Hinglaj most often described, and many accounts even say that it is not possible to enter the Goddess's valley without having made offerings there (Shastri 1977, 36). Three mud volcanoes are located in close proximity to one another, the highest of which plays a central role in religious practices related to the pilgrimage (see Fig. 5.2).[10]

This area appears in many accounts and travelogues and occupies a significant role in the older sources as well as in today's ritual practices (cf. Stein 1943; Hart 1839; Jareca n.d.; Abadhut 1964; Kshatriya 2005; Chhabria 2000; Ratnu 2007; Barhath 2006; Jethamalani 1994). The stop is located to the south of the MCH, at a distance of around 84 kilometers from the last major *paṛāv*, the village of Liari (Chhabria 2000, 60). Chandrakup is not connected to the main road, and therefore pilgrims must walk a few kilometers from the highway through the desert. During the *phālgun/caitra* festival, however, locals offer the pilgrims lifts in trucks and off-road vehicle up to the foot of the main volcano to make some extra money.

10. Hart writes that there are a total of eighteen such mud volcanoes in the area: seven close to Chandrakup and another eleven at other locations in Makran (Hart 1840, 145).

Over the years, the geothermal activity of the mud volcano has produced an accumulation of residue[11] reaching a current height of almost 150 meters, making Kup one of the world's largest volcanoes of its kind. The formation of such cones results from the constant expulsion of mud, which, due to Balochistan's low rainfall average, is not subject to rapid erosion (Snead 1964, 548). This scarcity of precipitation in the Makran area makes the significant heights of these formations possible. Similar mud volcanoes, active and inactive, are found at many other continental margins where two tectonic plates collide, with one suppressing the other (Delisle et al. 2002, 94). Such mud volcanoes are found, for example, west of Gwadar close to the Iran-Pakistan border (Snead 1964, 548). In this case—the Makran area—the Arabian plate is forced underneath the continental Eurasian plate, causing emissions of gas to form a few of these mud volcanoes along the rift (Snead 1964, 548).[12] Geologic surveys show that the geothermal activity of Chandrakup is due to the emission of methane gas, which also explains why the escaping matter's temperature is always "near-ambient" (Delisle et al. 2002, 93). In the same article, the authors show that Chandrakup is located on the axis of an anticline on which several other geothermic mud volcanoes are found (Delisle et al. 2002, 95). Other examples of similar thermic phenomena also exist on this anticline, such as at the *dargāh* (Urd.) of the Sufi saint Mango Pir, in northern Karachi (Snead 1964, 549). From Hart's account, it is evident that the north and south craters at Chandrakup were both once active (Hart 1839, 87–91). After an earthquake in 1945, the craters ejected an enormous amount of mud, and local witnesses observed a large fireball in the area, most likely due to the ignition of a tremendous amount of gas released in the quakes (Sondhi, cited in Delisle et al. 2002, 96). During my own visits, I always found the southern volcano to be dormant,[13] but the northern volcano always seemed to be in an active state, though the intensity of its emissions varied.

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11. According to the geologist A. W. Stiffe, the liquid part of this matter consists of chlorine, sulfuric acid, lime, soda, and potash (Stiffe, cited in Snead 1964, 555).

12. During my fieldwork, three volcanoes were visible in close proximity, but I have only witnessed ritual practices at the highest one, located in the north. Hart mentions that he saw four mud volcanoes in this area, but he also notes that offerings were only performed at the northern-most crater (Hart 1839, 89). Snead also noted four, which he observed to be in different stages of development (Snead 1964, 549).

13. Delisle et al. have done extensive research at the site. In their paper, however, they mistake the north and south craters repeatedly, which leads to confusion for the reader. This is most evident from the estimation of the height of each crater and their subsequent numbering of the two volcanoes, in which the south crater is described as taller than the north one.

The emission of gas is particularly significant to the alchemical understanding of the pilgrimage. This alchemical layer is associated mainly with the Nath Siddhas and emphasized in the work of David Gordon White (1996). White emphasizes the similarities between Hinglaj and Kamakhya, another important *śākta pīṭha* in eastern India, and even calls them "geographical and mythological mirror[s]" (White 1996, 196). According to this approach, Chandrakup is considered a manifestation of the Goddess, very similar to Jwalamukhi temple in Himachal Pradesh, where a blue flame burns on a water spring that is worshipped as the tongue of the Devi (White 1996, 193). Although Chandrakup itself is not among White's often cited mercury wells that, when combined with sulfur, serve as an alchemical symbol for the mystical union of Shiva and the Devi (White 1996, 194), he describes the volcano as the "principal feature" of the pilgrimage (White 1996, 205). White also cites a work of Philostratus from the third century describing a "Well of Truth" that was considered to possess magical properties (White 1996, 205, n120). Although Philostratus situates this well somewhere in the Indus region, I believe it far-fetched to associate his description with Chandrakup due to the relatively short life span of such mud formations. Yet, because the whole area is famous for its geothermal features, it is likely that volcanoes of significant size also existed in the third century. In general, White draws many interesting conclusions in his work, but I have not encountered any traces of his alchemical hypotheses at Chandrakup or the Hinglaj shrine today.

In terms of current practices at the volcano, many pilgrims today believe that Hinglaj's temple may only be entered after visiting Chandrakup and making proper offerings. As with many stops along the pilgrimage route, there exist differing narratives concerning the volcano, and a consistent practice or interpretation at Chandrakup is missing. Yet the ritual of throwing coconuts into the crater seems to be the most commonly practiced over the years.[14] According to tradition, the number of bubbles that rise, together with the intensity of the gas emission in response to the offering, defines the pilgrim's destiny. This augury was once done by the *chaṛīdār* and is done today either by someone from the HSM or any ritual expert traveling with the group. Brohi writes that Chandrakup today is used as a wishing well where pilgrims ask the residing deity for favors (Brohi 1998, 32–33). Shastri and Abadhut each give a detailed account of the ritual practices at Chandrakup from the middle of the twentieth century, and both authors use

14. Some pilgrims also offer pieces of bread. Snead mentions the offering of Ganges water, earthen pots, flowers, and red thread (Snead 1964, 553n9).

the setting at the top of the volcano for a climax in their narrative arc of suspense (see Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion). Captain Hart tells of a similar ritual performance at the rim of the volcano from the middle of the nineteenth century, which hints at a somewhat coherent practice. In the following I would like to recapitulate the current practices at Chandrakup volcano mentioned in Chapter 3 in more detail, as they bear importance to the production of space in the region.

Traditionally, the pilgrims bake a type of cake, or sweetbread, called the "*roṭ*," before ascending the slope of Chandrakup (cf. Hart 1839, 89; Shastri 1977, 43; Abadhut 1964, 157). The *roṭ* is made out of ingredients contributed by all the *yātrīs* and serves as a shared offering to Chandrakup or, as Hart says in his description, to the God Rama (Hart 1839, 89). Aside from coconuts, other oblations include *gāṁjā* (Hin. marijuana) and *cilams* (Hin. pipe to smoke marijuana), which are also thrown into the volcano (Shastri 1977, 42; Abadhut 1964, 157; Lakhavat 2011, 138).[15] Nowadays, the suggested offerings consist of coconuts (Urd. *nāriyal*), betel nut (Urd. *supārī*), coins (Urd. *sikkah*), and dal (Urd. *dāl*) (Jethamalani 1994, 44). Abadhut mentions that the offerings must submerge into the mud as a sign that Baba Chandrakup has accepted the oblation; however, this practice is not consistently followed.[16] Even Hart indicates that at the time of his own journey, the offerings did not sink due to the thickness of the mud (Hart, cited in Hughes 1877, 145). The night before ascending Chandrakup, the group stays awake (Hin. *jāg'raṇ*), fasting and meditating on the sins they will confess at the rim of the crater. At the top, the *yātrīs* first have to introduce themselves with their full name and place of origin and then call out their sins in front of the group. According to the bubbling of the mud and the reaction of the wind, the *chaṛīdār* is able to tell if the pilgrim's sins are forgiven (Shastri 1977, 41). If anyone is unwilling to confess (or if his or her transgressions are too cruel to be forgiven), then the bubbles stop rising and the offering is not accepted (Lakhavat 2011, 138). According to Abadhut and Shastri, in such situations, the *yātrī* is not allowed to proceed on the journey and must be left there in the desert to die (Abadhut 1964, 204; Shastri 1977, 41).

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15. Kshatriya mentions in his description of Chandrakup that the slope of the volcano itself has the form of Shiva's *cilam* (Kshatriya 2005, 88).

16. Certain Devipujak-Vagri pilgrims from Karachi have a contrasting interpretation: for them, the offering is accepted *only* when the coconut is thrown up again by the volcano. The explanation they offer for their belief is that Shiva, who resides in the volcano, must manifest in the form of a *liṅga*. This happens when a larger bubble emerges that takes the conical shape of the *liṅga*.

A similar description is found in Briggs, albeit in reference to the Chaurasi or Anil Kund, which will be described in detail below. Briggs quotes the traveler Haji Abdula Nabi, who writes that the water

> rises up at times with a bubbling noise, discolored like a river fresh swollen after rain, and carrying mud in suspension. The Hindu pilgrims, when this takes place, throw in betel-nuts, cloves, cardamoms and coconut. Should there be delay in the rising, pilgrims in the most abject manner will call on Mātā to give them a sight of herself, exhorting each other to reveal their sins and inwardly repent. (Briggs 1938, 108)

This association of certain motifs—here, the delay in the rising of bubbles and the renunciation of sins—with different places is paradigmatic for the pilgrimage network where, due to the lack of institutionalization, such attributes were for a long time not fully attached to certain places.

Nowadays, there are no such strict regulations at the volcano, and it is impossible to verify the extent to which restrictions were actually enforced in the past. Furthermore, during the *phālgun/caitra* festival, pilgrims, eager to continue on their journey, do not have the time to wait for their offerings to sink into the mud (even if its consistency would allow it on that day). In addition, locals immediately catch the coconuts with long poles and pull them out of the mud in order to resell them at the foot of the slope. Chandrakup volcano is generally used by many local Balochis to make some money by selling coconuts and tea or by begging for donations.

One more thing relating to the religious imaginary at Chandrakup should be added here. There is no prevailing notion about which deity is actually worshipped at the rim of the volcano. While Abadhut does not mention any particular god, but talks generally about "*Caṃdrakūp Bābā*" or "*Caṃdrakūp Mahārāj*," other accounts emphasize that Chandrakup is associated with Rama.[17] Today there are very few narratives found about the mytho-history of Chandrakup, but some have been passed down from colonial sources. Hughes recounts the following story in his book, *The Country of Baluchistan, Its Geography, Topography, Ethnology and History*:

> In the "Sat Jug," or golden age, Suda Shiwa, or Siva, and Parbatti, his wife, visited the Makli hills near Tatta. The former resolved to proceed onward to Hinglaj and Parbatti was ordered to prepare his

17. "*Chandarkūp srī rāmachandar sān mansūb āhe*" (Sin.; Ansari 2001, 296).

> provision of boiled juar [from Urd. <*joār*> Indian millet] for the journey. He arrived at Hinglaj, but could not find the Devi there. It is said that she took the shape of a fly, and so remained on the ball of ashes which Siva held in his hand. For twelve years he searched for her, but in vain, when, in a paroxysm of rage he dashed the ball to the ground, where it lay broken in eighty-four pieces. These eighty-four parts of the ball became the hills known as "Chandra-Kups." (Hughes 1877, 142)

Captain Hart mentions another myth about the emergence of the mud volcanoes in his travelogue from 1839:

> "After the abduction of Seeta by Rawan," [*sic*] among others engaged in endeavouring to discover the place of her concealment was Sedasheo (a form of Mahadeo.) For twelve years did he unceasingly prosecute the search without success. Worn out at length by his fruitless exertions and enraged at his unprofitable toil he dashed his "Biboot" (cake made of the fine ashes of cow-dung, for rubbing on the neck and arms, or marking the forehead) on the ground. It split into *eighteen pieces,* and formed as many Koops. Seeta, in the form of Shree Mata instantly appeared, and after chiding him for his passion informed him that she had all the time been his constant companion in the shape of a "Mukee" or fly, seated on his "Biboot." In gratitude for his exertions on her behalf, she ordained that previous to visiting her Temple, every pilgrim should pay his devotions at one of the "Koops," which Sedasheo named, after her husband "Rama Chandra," and his spirit is supposed to inhabit them. (Hart 1839, 88f.)

While this story clearly associates the mud volcano with the story of Rama and Sita, today, stories involving the prince from Ayodhya and his wife are rarely found in relation to the volcano. Pilgrims nowadays often explain simply that the volcano is the seat of Shiva, who must be visited and appeased with offerings so as to gain permission to meet his wife in her private abode. Jethamalani also maintains that the God Shiva is worshipped there (Jethamalani 1994, 44). Motyani, too, writes that Shiva is worshipped at Chandrakup and reinforces the explanation that the bubbles that rise from the crater are manifestations of the god in the form of a *liṅga* (Skt.; Motyani 2011, 281).

To this day, Chandrakup remains one of the principal places visited during the *phālgun/caitra melā*, and the stop is mentioned on the announcement flyers distributed by the HSM. The mud volcano's inclusion within the temple

committee's current "pilgrimage canon" has secured its position within the revitalized pilgrimage network.

5.4.5 The River Hingol

The River Hingol, also called River Aghor,[18] is the last major stop before the valley of Hinglaj. Unlike many other rivers in Balochistan, the Hingol flows throughout the year, even though it carries very little water during drier months. The Hingol's water level is partially responsible for the *phālgun/caitra* festival's date being chosen in the mid-1980s. Initially, when the annual festival was established, the HSM needed to select a weekend when the river's low water level could be anticipated so that the pilgrims would be able to safely cross. For this reason, the date of the festival was not fixed according to a religious calendar but was scheduled in consideration of local weather conditions. With the construction of a bridge over the Hingol in 2012—a project that was funded by the Balochistan government—the date of the festival no longer depended on the water level of the river and thus was shifted by the HSM to a date considered to be "more accurate."[19] At the time of writing, the HSM had recently decided to organize the *yātrā* on the weekend after the *caitra navarāti*.

Historically, as well as today, pilgrims take their last bath in the Hingol before they enter the valley of Hinglaj. Today, depending on the water level, this is often only a symbolic gesture in which the face is washed or some water is sprinkled on the forehead. The riverbank is also used by male and female devotees for the *pitṛtarpaṇ* (Hin. the ancestor worship) (Abadhut 1964, 197), and many come here to shave their heads as a sign of mourning after a family member has died (Abro 1991, 58). Shastri describes another practice in which the pilgrims use the *nīm* or *babūl* twig (Hin. *dātun*) to clean their teeth after they have bathed in the river (Shastri 1977, 51). After this, they give a donation (Hin. *dān-dakṣiṇā*) to the *chaṛīdār*. In the first half of the twentieth century, this was provided to the Aghori Baba, an ascetic who apparently lived in those days at the banks of the river (Abadhut 1964, 198; Shastri 1977, 51). After the donation, the twig is then dug into the earth on the other side of the Hingol. Abadhut also mentions this practice, but with a small variation: in his account, the pilgrims take two twigs, using one to clean the teeth (after weeks in which

18. Briggs writes that the river breaks through a gorge at some point, below which it is called Aghor. Above the gorge it is called Hingol (Briggs 1938, 106). Today the name Hingol is primarily used.

19. From a personal interview with an HSM worker in 2013.

the pilgrims used only sand to do so) and digging the other into the earth at the shore (Abadhut 1964, 196). Kshatriya describes this practice in more detail in his book. He writes that here, each pilgrim must choose a "*śaraṇ'bhāī*" (Hin. "brother taking refuge in the Mother") together with whom he or she will pass through the tunnel underneath Hinglaj's *mūrti*. Each pilgrim picks a twig and digs it into the earth while saying the name of his or her chosen *śaraṇ'bhāī*. On the way back from the *tīrtha*, the pilgrims must pass by the twigs again. Only when the twigs have started to blossom can the pilgrim be sure that his or her choice of *śaraṇ'bhāi* has been accepted by the Goddess (Kshatriya 2005, 77–78). This concept of the *śaraṇ'bhāī* is not bound to any specific gender constraints and is often taken very seriously by the pilgrims.

The Hingol is also of special importance for certain parts of the Lohana community that perform the ceremonies of the *jane'o* (Urd.), the bestowing of the sacred thread, and the *munḍan pāṭh* (Urd.), the shaving of the head, at the shore of the river (Jethamalani 1994, 7). Many Sindhi Lohana communities wear this string of cloth (Burton 1851, 315), and some perform a ceremony at the River Hingol for young males being initiated into the community. The age of those to be initiated is not fixed, and many young Lohanas undergo the ceremony just before their wedding. Due to the heterogeneity of the Lohanas in Sindh, it is not possible to make any universal claim for the whole community. In general, however, most members of the Lasi Lohana community perform their rituals at the River Hingol. Similar to other *paṛāv*, so too at the Hingol it is mainly the ritual practice of the Lasi Lohana community that is promoted by the HSM and that increasingly prevails among visitors.

In 2008, the Balochistan Assembly abandoned a plan put forward by the Water and Power Development Authority of Pakistan (WAPDA) to build a dam in the Hingol River close to the MCH (Lakhavat 2011, 147–148). The dam would have flooded the accommodation roads to the temple and endangered the locality and its associated festivals. So the WAPDA initially suggested relocating three holy places to a higher elevation and guaranteed the construction of a new access road.[20] This proposition was rejected by the HSM, which argued that these sites were not like common temples and could not simply be relocated. The HSM's spokesperson further added: "This is a site of pilgrimage which is place specific."[21] In 2008, the lawmakers in the Balochistan Assembly reacted to the concerns and protests of the Hindu

20. Unfortunately, this source does not specify which three holy places were intended to be relocated. See Dawn (2009, http://www.dawn.com/news/343567/newspaper/column).

21. Dawn (2009, http://www.dawn.com/news/343567/newspaper/column).

community and asked the federal government to stop the project. In 2009, after a year of suspension, the WAPDA chose to continue with the controversial plans but decided to shift the site of the dam a few kilometers north in order to protect the temple. This resolution was in keeping with a consensus between the WAPDA, the Balochistan Assembly, and the Hindu community. This example shows how conceptions of space contrast in different discourses. For the WAPDA, the temple was merely an obstacle standing in the way of its plans to advance economic development in the area. The department's suggestion to shift the holy sites demonstrates its misunderstanding of the Hindu community's conception of space. For the Hindu community, due to the temple's *svayaṃbhū* character and its connection to the landscape, it could not just be relocated.

5.5 *The Valley of Hinglaj*

Today, the point at which the Hinglaj Valley begins is clearly marked by a wall built by the HSM in 1996. While traditional travelogues and accounts of pilgrims walking to the shrine generally demonstrate an extended conception of the Goddess's sacred geography,[22] the disappearance of the old pilgrimage paths led to the elimination of many stops en route and subsequently also to a change in the scale and perception of Hinglaj's "imagined landscape" (Eck 1998). This development reflects a general shift from the kinesthetic experience of the pilgrimage route to a more "place-centered" or "sedentary" tradition in which the valley and its localized rituals have become increasingly prominent. Today, this clear separation between the inside and the outside of the Goddess's valley is also demarcated by a certain code of conduct to which visitors inside the valley are supposed to adhere. Specific guidelines are suggested by two signs—one in English and one in Urdu—that lay out the "do's" and "don'ts" of the sacred geography. These rules reflect some of the traditional behaviors required of pilgrims on their way to Hinglaj (Shastri 1977, 11) but in some ways also appear to respond to new challenges that evolved out of the temple's increased accessibility. While I will consider the implications of these rules in greater detail in Chapter 6, I want to emphasize here the role of these signs in creating Hinglaj as a religious space. Although they are only suggestive in nature, the boards still indicate the existence of particular "ideal" behaviors and practices that are not required outside the walls of the

22. This is evident from varying notions of the borders of the Goddess's empire. Cf. Hart (1839, 82) and Wilford (1851, 256–257).

confined area. They are connected to an ideal imaginary of the *tīrtha sthān* and at the same time conceptualize religious space through practices that separate the inside of the valley from the routine of quotidian life outside of it. Knott writes that

> [r]itual practice itself is interesting when seen from the perspective of spatial practice as it is none other than spatial practice transformed by religious meaning, and often—though not always—performed in the context of a space set apart as sacred and by an appropriate ritual practitioner. (Knott 2005, 43)

In this way, the wall, together with these signs posted in the valley, do both: they contribute to producing the valley's space as religious space by regulating its activities, but they are simultaneously also a product of the *spatialization* of Hinglaj.

During the *phālgun/caitra melā* (and, to a lesser extent, also during other festivals), this "threshold" of the (Hindu) sacred space, as one enters from the nonsacred space, is also marked by the presence of the Balochistan police standing guard at the valley's gate. The police are under an official order to allow only Hindus to enter the festival. Due to the huge crowds, however, the mandate represents an impossible task; there is no way to determine the visitors' religious affiliations from afar. Yet the police still show their presence through selective searches at the entrance as well as uniformed and ununiformed patrolling inside the valley. This theoretical exclusion of Muslims during the festival is a complex issue that is not directly equivalent to their practical exclusion. There certainly is no strict enforcement of this segregation, and I myself spent some time with a Muslim traveler from Karachi at Hinglaj who had no problems entering the valley whatsoever during the festival. However, similar to the two signs posted, official support from the Balochistan government in the form of these policemen conceptually separates the valley into an outside and an inside, which thus becomes, by means of exclusion, a "Hindu-area." Even though this transformation is not gained through consistent exclusion of Muslims on the practical level, the concept of segregation itself influences the religious imaginary. Hinglaj emerges as an imaginary of space, or representational space, for Pakistani Hindus, which creates a feeling of unity, coherence, and belonging. In the same moment that the police imposes the conceptual (and imaginary) exclusion of Muslims at the valley's gate, major differences in caste, language, and ethnicity among the Hindus entering the valley dissolve.

Another spatial distinction between the inside and the outside of the valley is produced by commercial activities during the festival. Most shops and tea

stalls are not allowed to be set up in the valley, and so there is a clear separation between the commercial area and the sacred area. Only the descendants of Dost Mohammad, the Muslim caretaker at the shrine before the HSM gained its influence, were allowed to sell cigarettes and snacks inside the valley during the time of my fieldwork. In recent years, the commercial area outside the wall has expanded, and the HSM has had to clear out additional space for shops and parking lots.

Inside the valley, another spatial distribution stands out. As mentioned above, in 2008, the Mandali introduced a new ticketing system requiring the purchase of an ochre-colored, plastic wristband called the *bhag'vā paṭṭī* (Hin. ochre cloth/ribbon) in place of the former paper tickets. During the time of the *phālgun/caitra melā*, visitors were required to wear the 250-rupee (in 2012) wristband visibly if they wished to cross into the western part of the valley where the Kali and Hinglaj temples are located. While in years prior, the ticketing system had been rather loosely regulated, the new system strictly required the display of the *paṭṭī* at two separate checkpoints for access to the western part of the valley.

Since its establishment, the HSM has always charged a fee for the organization of the pilgrimage (transport, food, water, etc.). The Mandali sees itself as the successor of the *chaṛīdār*, who also received money for his services. However, this payment system differs significantly from that of the years before as it separates the valley into two parts: a general access area and an area accessible only to those willing—and able—to pay. The implications of this shift and the subsequent resistance from the visitors are analyzed in greater detail in Chapters 4 and 6. From the perspective of the production of space, however, the *bhag'vā paṭṭī* system introduced yet another level of religious space inside the valley. While through the construction of the confining walls, the temple organization produced a space meant only for the Hindu community, the system of payment further subdivided that space, creating an area only for the *affluent* Hindu community. Notwithstanding the fact that 250 rupees (about €2 in 2012) might not seem a large sum, for simple peasants, this amount equals a day's wage for work in the fields. Since the wristbands are not transferable to others, families tend to send the male members inside with the funds they have available, leaving the female members outside of the pay-only area. In this way, the HSM's introduction of the *bhag'vā paṭṭī* inside the valley led to yet another spatial separation—one that is not only economic but clearly gendered as well. The production of this economically advantaged and predominantly male area represents the *spatialization* of social structure and hierarchy within parts of the Pakistani-Hindu society.

5.5.1 The Ashapura Temple

The first stop inside the confined boundary walls is the Ashapura temple. Hart writes that Thaomal, the rich Sindhi merchant who initiated the pilgrimage in which Hart took part, said that his main reason for undertaking the pilgrimage was to have his son's head shaven at Ashapura *paṛāv* and to offer the hair to the Goddess (Hart 1839, 94). This historical note speaks to the central position that the *paṛāv* of Ashapura ("the one who fulfills wishes") enjoyed in the middle of the nineteenth century and also to Hinglaj's connection with Devi worship in Gujarat.[23] This *paṛāv* was traditionally where the pilgrimage groups rested and is considered the last stop of the *yātrā* (Goldsmid 1863, 207; Jethamalani 1994, 7). Nowadays, there is an increasing number of pilgrimage shelters inside the valley's confined area, almost all of which were built after the completion of the Makran Coastal Highway in 2001. One of the oldest of these shelter houses was constructed near the statue of the Goddess Ashapura. Dayaram Kapri, mentioned above, tells the following story about the place. The Goddess Ashapura used to sit there to welcome the pilgrims. Since at this point, the devotees' wish to accomplish the *yātrā* was finally fulfilled and the shrine of Hinglaj was near, the Goddess took the form of Ashapura to congratulate them. In memoriam of the days when the Goddess still made herself visible in this way to the pilgrims, a statue of Ashapura was erected there by a Gujarati businessman. Members of the HSM, however, tell another story. According to the organization, the Ashapura statue was built by the HSM itself at the end of the 1990s. The organization claims that it simply replaced a small stone at that location, smeared with *siṃdūr* (vermilion), which was once worshipped as the Goddess. According to them, they also erected a statue of Hanuman right next to that of Ashapura. The Mandali claims that many people did not know what the second stone represented, and many worshipped it as Ganesha or as another Goddess. According to its statements, the Hanuman statue was built there "so that people would know who is worshipped there." By putting up the statue, the temple organization solidifies its own interpretation, and I have not met any devotee today who claims that the Hanuman worship at this place is somehow wrong. Only Badar Abro, a Sindhi scholar, writes that the Hanuman statue is out of place in the valley and does not fit into the site's cosmology (Abro 1991, 58).

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23. In Joshi's book *Jay Āśāpurā*, this connection is described. According to him, it was the Goddess Hinglaj who helped Jam Bambhaniya from Sindh to victory in Ghumil (Gujarat) in the fourteenth century, a place where his father Unnar had been defeated years before. Hinglaj advised Bambhaniya to build a temple for her in Kutch since she had fulfilled the wish of Bambhanaiya's father, Unnar. Hence, Bambhaniya built a temple for the Goddess in her form as Ashapura (Joshi 2010, 8).

I want to add that this is not the only example where the HSM erects a statue of a certain deity for the sake of telling people "who is worshipped there." I see this as a paradigmatic example for the HSM's cultural hegemony, which for the past decades enforces its own particular interpretation at the site. Further examples and their implications will be discussed below.

The Ashapura *paṛāv* once played a central role in the valley, as it was the place from which trips to the temples and holy ponds in the mountains began. In the 1970s, the camels still had to be left at Ashapura while the pilgrims continued on foot since the remainder of the path was too dangerous for the animals (Khatri 1973, 24f.). Another legend says that camels are not allowed to cross into the valley since their feet would swell from the presence of the Goddess (Abro 1991, 58). By 2009, many more shelters had been built in the area around this stop, and construction of additional buildings to accommodate the thousands of pilgrims was ongoing the last time I visited the shrine in 2015. The plentitude of pilgrimage shelters available in the valley has caused the Ashapura stop to lose its central position as the main resting stop before, and in between, the necessary rituals, and its role has been degraded to that of merely another temple inside the valley.

5.5.2 The Kali Mata Shrine

One of the most contentious and intriguing areas in the valley today is certainly the shrine of Kali Mata, which is also associated with the practice of animal sacrifice (Hin. *bali/balidān*). There are numerous sources indicating that animal sacrifice was once a commonly practiced part of the ritual activities inside the valley, but it was restricted to the area of this shrine only. Hart (1839) and Goldsmid (1861) write that in the nineteenth century, pilgrims would sacrifice goats the day before finally proceeding to the shrine of Hinglaj. The blood of the animals was then spattered inside a particular cavity in the wall symbolizing the mouth of the Goddess Kali (see Fig. 5.3).

The amount of time required for the blood to dry on the warm sandstone was then interpreted as a sign of the Goddess's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the sacrifice (Hart 1839, 95). Parts of this tradition still live on in certain communities. For example, I witnessed the sacrifice of a rooster during one of the festivals, the blood of which was thrown into the cavity on top of the shrine by a group of Devipujak-Vagris from Karachi (see Chapter 6). In the nineteenth century, the pilgrims' sacrificial goats were slaughtered by local Muslims, very likely belonging to the Zikri Muslim community, who, according to Hart, also kept the carcasses (Hart 1839, 95). It is not clear how long this tradition continued or how strictly it was practiced, so one can only speculate

FIGURE 5.3 Opening into the stone wall at the Kali Mata temple, 2012

if this was a special arrangement or not. Many texts show that after the sacrifice, pilgrims were not allowed to proceed immediately to the Hinglaj shrine, located just a few hundred meters away. Instead, they were required to return to Ashapura *paṛāv*, where the group would wait until nightfall; only then could they proceed to Hinglaj (Jethamalani 1994, 8). Today, the practice of animal sacrifice, or *bali*, is ideologically charged and is banned during the festivals. Certain members of the HSM have also expressed their wish that the tradition be discontinued completely. Recent texts describe this practice, and a few (Hindu) authors attempt to distance themselves from it (Motyani 2011, 283). This all serves to support the claim that *bali* is not original to Hinduism and has never been a part of the "original" Hinglaj tradition (Khatri 1973, 10). This issue of animal sacrifice as a nodal point in the distinguishing of "proper" from "improper" Hindu behavior inside the valley will be dealt with separately in Chapter 6. In any case, these days, most pilgrims opt to offer coconuts at the Kali temple instead of animals.

5.6 The Hinglaj Temple

A couple of hundred meters after the Kali Mata shrine, the confining walls of the Hinglaj Mata temple on the southern side of the valley spring into view. The walls are built on a stone platform leading into a natural cave that was

apparently carved out of the mountain by a river ages ago. Only the northern and eastern walls are made of stone bricks and attach to the naturally formed hollow producing the foundations of the temple (see Figs. 5.4 and 5.5).

The cave forms a natural arch about 9 meters high at its peak and about 64 meters in length. It is apparent from one of the earliest photographs of the site available, from Marc Aurel Stein's 1943 account, that the basic stone structure had already been built in the mid-twentieth century (Stein 1943, 196). However, the earliest colonial sources on the Hinglaj Valley—Wilford (1851), Hart (1839), and Goldsmid (1863)—do not mention any stable stone structure; Hart and Goldsmid instead describe a "mud edifice" (Hart 1839, 95; Goldsmid 1863, 208). Later, in his travelogue from a 1961 journey, Nabi Bux Khan Baloch mentions a stone structure, estimating the age of the building to be somewhere between 50 to 60 years (Khan Baloch 1970, 132). These accounts suggest that the confining walls must be roughly a century old. There is neither a foundation stone nor is any inscription visible today that could help to determine the building's exact age. To date, I have been unable to find any sources from between the years 1861 and 1943 mentioning the temple, and no one from the HSM or any other local people were able to determine the age of the walls. Thus, the exact age of the enclosure remains unknown. I often heard that the

FIGURE 5.4 The temple of Hinglaj. Shot taken from the west side of the valley, 2012

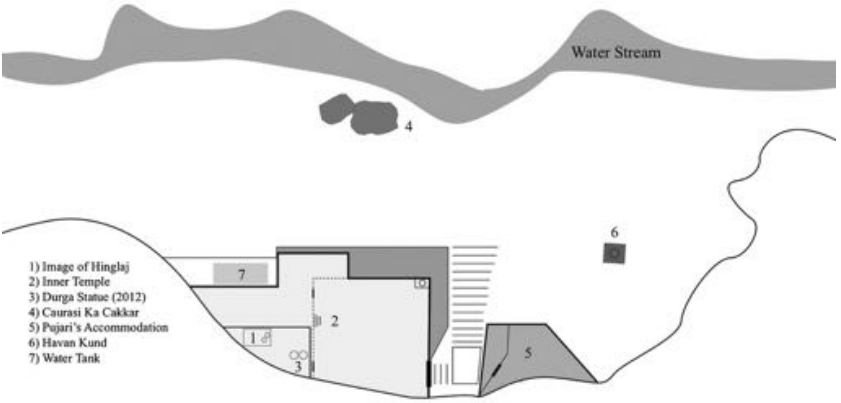

FIGURE 5.5 Overview of the temple and the surrounding valley (design by Saboor Haider)

walls were built gradually over time with stones from the valley by pilgrims and mendicants. The veracity of this claim, however, cannot be determined.

At the time of my fieldwork, the northern (front) portion of the temple was supported by a concrete platform opening up to a small flat space. This area was used by Gopal Maharaj to serve tea and snacks to his guests. On the eastern side, a set of stairs constructed around 1998 to replace a simple stone heap led up to the inner courtyard of the temple where larger groups can gather for the *pūjā* or *bhajans*. In the past, this inner space was separated into two rooms: one where music was played and the other where food was stored (Hart 1839, 95; Goldsmid 1863, 208; Abro 1991, 62). The HSM demolished the divider between the two rooms around 1998 in order to create a wider space to accommodate the crowds. The current stone walls inside the cave's confines support no roof since the overhanging arch of the cave forms a natural shelter from sun and rain. Older photographs and videotapes show that pilgrims who successfully reached the shrine would write their names and addresses on the walls. Inside the temple, many names were visible written in Gujarati, Nastaliq, English, and Bengali. During the HSM's renovations in the late 1990s, the walls were cleaned and the inside of the temple was completely covered with tiles. Unfortunately, this reconstruction work also obliterated many traces of the temple's history, complicating a historical survey.

At the end of the 1990s, an additional room was built opposite the entrance for the residing *pujārī*, Gopal Maharaj. During the *melā*, this place is used for storing drinking water. While many buildings inside the Hinglaj Valley were financed by the provincial government of Balochistan, according to the HSM,

the reconstruction work at the temple was supported mainly by donations from the Hindu community.

5.6.1 The Image of Hinglaj

The image of Hinglaj is located on the far west side of the temple, where the arch of the natural cave inside which the temple is nestled reaches down to meet the ground. Now considered to be the main image of the Goddess, the representation rests on an oblong stone of approximately 1 meter by 1.5 meters sitting on the far west side of a wide platform about 1 meter off the ground. The platform itself is around 5.5 to 7.5 meters wide, but it is irregular instead of rectangular in shape (see Fig. 5.6).

The platform was built around the base of a huge rock, or maybe a mud hill, of unknown age (Hart 1839, 95). Over time, it has been augmented with masonry to create an even surface across the entire west side of the temple. The Goddess's image seems to rest on an extension of the cave wall, under which there is a small channel. Devotees consider this cavity the entrance to the Goddess's womb (Hin. *garbha*); the tunnel is of particular importance for the rituals and the religious imaginary at Hinglaj. It is this alleged connection

FIGURE 5.6 Hinglaj Devi, 2012

of the oblong stone with the cave wall that has endowed the image with the characteristic of *svayaṃbhū*.

Around the end of the 1990s, the Mandali began renovations in the temple, covering the platform and parts of the shrine's walls with tiles. Particularly regrettable is the partial obstruction of a Hindi inscription on the back of the oblong stone, which occurred during this work; some of the words from the inscription were partially buried under concrete and tiles. Today, only the name of the donor, who apparently helped construct the image's foundation, is visible. Unfortunately, if there was any date on this inscription, it is no longer visible, though Stein does not mention any inscription in his account (Stein 1943). Some twenty years later, however, Khan Baloch mentions a stone inscription "probably in a Bengali script, that we could not understand."[24] He also says that they had found the inscription directly in front of two engraved footsteps of a holy man. I am quite certain that this is the inscription still partially visible today on the back of the image's east side. Notwithstanding the fact that the author mixes up Hindi with Bengali letters, the two footprints he mentions are still clearly visible directly in front of the writing.

Ishtiaq Ansari, who must have visited Hinglaj shortly before the beginning of the reconstruction work, wrote that he remembers an inscription written in Hindi. He even transliterated the text into Sindhi writing and published it in his book *Dhartī Mātā* (Ansari 2001, 333). Interestingly, the text he provides is clearly different from the current inscription on the back of the image; it must therefore also have fallen victim to the construction work done by the HSM.[25] Virsimal Dewani, who visited the shrine for the first time in 1971, does not remember any additional writings around the temple, and neither did any local resident of the nearby villages. Thus, it can only be surmised that the present inscription—and therefore parts of the structure around the image—must have appeared between 1943 and 1961 when Khan Baloch's party visited the shrine. The other inscription mentioned by Ansari is more difficult to trace, but it must have been produced after Khan Baloch's visit in 1961. Unfortunately, the renovations blurred many traces dating from before the

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24. "*janhin te ġālibān bangālī zabān meṉ katabo laġal ho, jo āsān paṛhe kīn saghyāsūn*" (Khan Baloch 1970, 133).

25. The text reads: "I have taken refuge in the fold of the Mother Shri Hinglaj. You keep my sins safe, my [second] birth was successful. Landlord Dhasaram Kemchand Patel's deceased wife's parents, Guru, Gosain, and the seven generations should prosper!" (Ansari 2001, 333). The current text on the back of the image reads: "Following the order of Shri Matavala Baba, Jagat Janani ordered to build this lion's throne for the Mother Hinglaj." As already mentioned above, unfortunately, this is all that is decipherable today.

FIGURE 5.7 The inside of the temple with the two doors leading under the platform, 2012

1990s, and an archeological survey of the site would be necessary to uncover the exact age of the structure around the image.

The platform holding the oblong stone structure and the image of Hinglaj separates the inside of the temple into two parts: the western, elevated part is mostly used for *pūjā* and *ār'tī*, and the lower, eastern part is for housing bigger groups of pilgrims during the festivals. From the lower yard, one can also see two doors, each around 90 centimeters high, that lead into the tunnel underneath the platform (Fig. 5.7). These doors form the entrance and exit to the Goddess's *garbha* (Hin. womb) mentioned above, a U-shaped tunnel forming a semicircle underneath the image and opening up in the temple yard.

5.6.2 The Production of a Religious Imaginary: The History of the Hinglaj Image

Today, the oblong stone upon which Hinglaj/Nanī's image rests is partly covered with tiles, and only several stone bumps are visible atop it. Here I will

come back to what has been said above about the production of space, and I will further show that the manner in which the HSM carried out the renovations significantly changed the way visitors are able to approach the image, which has subsequently also influenced ritual practices at the shrine. Through "foregrounding" (Fairclough 2001a) some parts of the image and literally covering up others, in the late 1990s, the HSM directed the visitor's gaze to a narrow area of the stone cluster visible in the rear of the larger oblong supporting stone. Apparently, some hundred years ago, the whole structure was at the center of the visitors' attention, while now, it is primarily the two globular stones on the eastern side of the rectangular formation that are emphasized.

Representations of eyes and noses have also been attached to the two round stones today to bestow the rocks with human faces. Over the course of time, pilgrims have also brought women's ornaments, crowns, and umbrellas to decorate the image. This garnishing of the stone heaps corresponds to a certain interpretation of the shrine from the *Pīṭhanirṇaya* (seventeenth to eighteenth century), where it is written that the upper part of the head, the *brahmarandhra* (Skt. a suture or aperture in the crown of the head), of the Goddess Sati fell at Hinglaj (Sircar 1973, 35). According to this interpretation, one of the globular stones on the eastern side is Sati's skull, which came to rest there after Vishnu cut her body into several pieces.

Today, the other round stone is often interpreted as the face of one of Durga's *vīrs* who helped her to kill the demon Mahishasura. Another story about the second face recalls elements of the famous myth of Narasimha, canonized in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. The following is a paraphrase from different written sources (Abro 1991; Khatri 1973; Chhabria 2000):

> The demon Vichitra had two sons. One of them was called Hingol and the other was named Sindur. Once Sindur went to China, where he started to loot gold, silver, and other precious material from the people living there. In those days, the people of China were worshippers of Shiva, and so they went to his temple to request help. Shiva was pleased with the people of China, and so he promised them that within three days, Ganesha would come and relieve them from their afflictions. After three days, Ganesh came indeed, and killed the tyrant Sindur. When Hingol heard about the death of his brother, he swore revenge on the gods. But Hingol also knew that he would have to become more powerful to be able to face the gods in a battle. So he retreated to a mountain, raised his hands toward the sky, and stood on one toe for thousands of years. Brahma was pleased with Hingol's determination and so appeared to him and granted him a favor. Hingol wished that he could not be killed

in war, by any weapon, or by any human being and also not under the sky nor on the earth. After Brahma granted Hingol this request, the demon started to gather an army and immediately attacked the gods in heaven. The gods were overwhelmed by the power of the assault and fled, so Hingol and his army took over and gained control over the sacrifices from earth. The gods had no other chance than to go to Parvati and ask for her help. The Goddess knew that only a trick could bring the mighty demon Hingol down, and so she appeared on earth as a beautiful woman. She went to the Himalaya where the demons had settled down. When Hingol heard of the beautiful woman in the kingdom, he immediately tried to convince her to marry him. But the Devi did not even listen to the words of the demon king and simply started roaming the earth. Hingol was hurt by this rejection and went after her. At the River Indus, the Goddess stopped and asked him: "Why do you follow me? I can never start a union with a demon like you!" Then she turned around and went away. Hingol was blind with love and followed her into Sindhudesh. When he found her at the place where the shrine is located today, the Goddess absorbed him into her body because the demon could not be killed by any human being and also not on the earth nor under the sky. When Hingol realized that his end was near, he called out to the Goddess for one last wish. As Hingol, too, was her child, the Goddess granted him a last favor. Hingol said: "Oh Goddess, I want you to stay on this earth until its destruction. You should remain here at this very place under my name and fulfill all wishes that people bring to you!" Then Hingol died and fully merged into the body of the Goddess. All the gods came to the Devi and worshipped her. Then the Goddess said: "From now on I will be called Hinglaj Devi, and this place should be my place of worship. I will stay here forever with Hingol." Then she disappeared. Since this day, both of their faces are found inside the cave.

This story, which is clearly a reference to the legend of Narasimha in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, however, is rarely heard at the shrine today. Devotees often simply state that the other face is Shiva's or Rama's. As already mentioned, no particular myth had, as of the end of my research, fully solidified around this enigmatic part of the statue, and different names and characteristics were attached to it at different times.

Another source, the *Dakṣayajñabhaṅga*, a part of the *Caṇḍīmaṅgala* written by the Bengali poet Mukundarama (sixteenth century), instead states that the navel rather than the Devi's *brahmarandhra* has fallen at Hinglaj

(Sircar 1973, 33). This corresponds to the idea, put forward by some devotees in India and Pakistan, that since the womb (*garbha*) is directly underneath the *sanctum* it must have been the navel that has fallen in Hinglaj. This story, however, is only rarely encountered among visitors today, and it is clear that the imaginary of the fallen skull is the prevailing one. Kshatriya brings these two conflicting ideas together when he writes that the *sanctum* is actually the image of a sleeping woman preparing to give birth (Kshatriya 2005, 79).

The two circular rocks are connected to a collection of other stones that together form a semicircular shape, imagined today as an anthropomorphic figure lying flat with its head toward the east and its legs toward the west (see Fig. 5.8). In older pictures taken before the reconstruction work, the figure's whole anatomy is still visible. In those photographs, the figure appears to be formed out of several connected stones or *piṇḍ* (Hin. lump, a ball, stones that are worshipped as images of the Goddess) that emerge out of the oblong stone (see Fig. 5.9).

In recent decades, these stones have been covered with layer after layer of vermilion paste (Hin. *siṃdūr*), a sticky orange substance that fills the gaps between the stones and helps blend them into one coherent figure. Today the figure's alleged body parts from the head downward are always covered with

FIGURE 5.8 Picture of the Goddess Hinglaj from early 1980. The additional drawing of a face depicts the position in which the Goddess was imagined (courtesy of Virsimal Dewani)

FIGURE 5.9 The Hinglaj image in the year 1992 (courtesy of Avarji, Jodhpur)

red and orange cloth, and thus its full shape is no longer visible. This covering up of the stone clusters also serves to guide the gaze of visitors toward the two faces in the east.

Unfortunately, such changes have rendered accurate assessments of the figure's age all but impossible. However, a close reading of how pilgrims and visitors describe the image in older travelogues, together with an analysis of a few old photographs that are available, indicates how the perception of the image changed for visitors over time. Earlier descriptions suggest that the image of the Goddess, generally considered as *svayaṃbhū*, was not only perceived differently by visitors but actually had a different shape just a few decades ago. As probably the earliest European visitor to the shrine who left an extensive account, Captain Hart described the image as

> an oblong stone within a railed space, in size and shape like a small Mahomedan tombstone, but raised and hollowed a little at each end for the purposes of holding the sacred fire. (Hart 1839, 96)

Apparently, in Hart's view, the whole oblong stone bore importance. Without the current tile covering, the image must have appeared more like a grave with

a massive covering stone, on top of which some heaps formed a "U" shape that was used for a ritual fire. While it seems that in Hart's time the stones themselves formed a space for the *havan* ritual, in Aurel Stein's 1943 photograph, a separate vessel for the fire is visible. For a long time, this *dhūnī* or *yajña kuṃḍ* (Hin.), into which ritual offerings to the Goddess are given, was in the center of the oblong stone until the 1990s when it was shifted to the front of the image.[26] Recently, a large *yajña kuṃḍ* has been built in the yard in front of the temple. Over the past few decades, the *havan* ceremony has become the climax of the *phālgun/caitra melā*, with thousands of visitors attending. Due to the ceremony's popularity, the inner temple could no longer accommodate the crowds, requiring the construction of the *havan kuṃḍ* outside.

In his writing, Hart does not pay much attention to what is on top of the rectangular structure, nor does he emphasize the two round stones. He also fails to mention any impression of a sleeping anthropomorphic figure or any image particularly suggestive of the Goddess. Such perceptions lie in the eye of the beholder, however, and Hart surely looked upon the scene with a gaze different from that of a Hinglaj worshipper. But the Captain was not a lone traveler in this region; he had come with a large group of Hindu devotees and a *chaṛīdār*, the pilgrimage leader who instructed the pilgrims extensively along the way in religious issues in general and the pilgrimage in particular (Hart 1839, 77f.). Considering the importance of the *sanctum sanctorum* as the ultimate goal of a dangerous journey for those he spoke with, it is curious that throughout the twenty-one-day journey, no one ever mentioned to Hart that the stone structure was considered to be the image of the Devi in a resting position. It also seems that Hart deemed the central place on the oblong stone, the *dhūnī*, to be the main spot for the ritual activities rather than the face of the Goddess or her companions. Hart also mentions the entrance to the tunnel between the wall of the mountain and the "earthen platform" on which the whole structure rests and writes that it is called "Shuru" (Hart 1839, 98). In any case, an alleged anthropomorphic shape of the Goddess or the two faces, which are the central focus of worship for pilgrims today, did not seem to have been conspicuous or of any importance for Hart or his Hindu companions who went on the *yātrā*.

Another British traveler who personally visited Hinglaj in 1861 is Sir Frederic John Goldsmid, whose travels along the Makran coast are well

26. If one follows the work of Ansari (2001), then a large *agnī kuṇḍ* (Sin. fire place) was also located right behind what is assumed to be the face of the Goddess. Unfortunately, Ansari's maps of the area tend to be imprecise at times, and since I have not found another account confirming this, the information cannot be verified.

documented in his article from 1863. Goldsmid was accompanied by a Sindhi "Moonshee" (from Sin. "*munśī*" a scribe, a language teacher) who provided him with information about the site's particularities (Goldsmid 1863, 193). Of the actual temple, Goldsmid writes that it lacked "architectural magnificence or beauty" and that the wooden construction rather appeared as something that "an infant taste for architecture would create out of wooden toy-bricks" (Goldsmid 1863, 207). He also describes the inside of the structure, which, in the middle of the nineteenth century, consisted of two rooms. Goldsmid writes about the *sanctum* at the temple:

> Two diminutive domes, one at the head and one at foot of a short, tomb-shaped mud erection, marked the chosen sanctum of this divinity of the Hindoo mythology. (Goldsmid 1863, 208)

Like Hart, Goldsmid does not mention any anthropomorphic figure, nor does he provide any suggestion of the two faces that are now visible at the east side of the rectangular stone. Again, like Hart, Goldsmid seems to have seen the *sanctum* as a tombstone with some stone heaps on top. The two domes mentioned are not the two stones on the eastern side, now commonly accepted as the two faces, but rather the two elevations on both sides of the stone. Apparently Goldsmid's Sindhi guide at the temple also failed to mention any of the current imaginaries around the site that would have been noteworthy for Goldsmid's account.

Another early source, unfortunately not nearly as detailed, is that of Colonel Wilford, another British military officer, who had probably worked with pilgrims traveling to Hinglaj as early as 1811. His account of the valley is fairly fragmentary, leading one to assume that the colonel himself never visited Hinglaj. However, Wilford's description, probably learned from some of his informants, does mention the valley and the image:

> There are no statues, nor temples; but shapeless stones and dark cavities in the ravines, are dignified with these names. *Loca-mátá* the mother of the mankind, is the chief deity, and before her temple, they strip naked, and rolling themselves upon the rough pavement they, like madmen, call out "*Ai-mátá! Ai-mátá!* cleanse us from our impurities. (Wilford 1851, 258f.)

Wilford's informants, again, evidently did not report any interpretation of an anthropomorphic image worshipped at the shrine. His account refers only to some shapeless stones that occupy the center of attention at the temple. The

colonel's informants omitted mention of the tunnel connected to the ritual described above.

Unfortunately, I have been unable to find another account offering a description of the shrine or the image in the decades following 1861. Not until 1943 did Marc Aurel Stein, the Hungarian-British archeologist mentioned above, visit the place and write down his findings. Stein gives a relatively detailed account of the area some eighty years after Goldsmid's journey there. He also provides the oldest photograph of the image available to me, which together with his description of the shrine at that time throws an interesting light on the developments of the past seven decades. Stein describes the image with these words:

> On a low platform in the middle there is raised a curious stone block, narrow in the middle and of globular shape at both ends, which by pious Hindu eyes is taken for a natural representation of the Goddess Nani, apparently worshipped as a manifestation of Durga . . . . It obviously imparts to this sacred spot the character of a *svayam-bhu* or "self-created" Tirtha. Behind the head of the supposed image a low rectangular passage leads through what may have been partly a natural rift, but now is lined with rough masonry and roofed with timber . . . . Muhammadan pilgrims who also visit Hinglaj take the stone block, which a carved railing bearing various sacred emblems surrounds, as marking the grave of a saintly wife of ᶜAli, miraculously translated to this spot. (Stein 1943, 202)

Stein is the first among the writers cited here to mention the shape of a head behind which the entrance to the tunnel leads underneath the structure. His description supports a conception of the image similar to that portrayed today. But Stein's account also illustrates the two possible modes of interpreting the image that existed prior to the HSM's institutionalization of the shrine: one interpretation sees the site as the gravestone of a saintly figure in Islam (interchangeably the grandmother, nanny, or wife of Ali), and the other interpretation sees it as the (lying) representation of the Hindu Devi or the Goddess Nani. A major feature of the changes brought about by the HSM's refurbishing work and the subsequent tiling of the *sanctum* at the end of the 1990s was the reduction of the possible interpretations that could be attributed to the image and thus the attempt to solidify one particular narrative at the shrine. This is a crucial point, since the changes around the *mūrti* are paradigmatic for the politics of "Hinduization" around the construction of religious space at Hinglaj (see also Chapter 6). To analyze these changes, I wish to borrow

from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), mainly associated with the work of Norman Fairclough (2001b) and Ruth Wodak (2009). Studies in CDA concern themselves with how information is conferred by the absence of details, implicit statements, and propositions (Riggins 1997, 10–11). Fairclough, for example, distinguishes between foregrounded and backgrounded textual details in his work in order to penetrate the substratum of the written composition (Fairclough 2001a). For him, the analysis of a text needs to be conscious about not only things directly said but also the way things are said and—as already mentioned—what is not said in a text at all. What serves as a useful methodology in written material can also be utilized in understanding the production of space and hence in analyzing the composition of the *mūrti* at Hinglaj. Just as it is legitimate to ask the question: "Which group in society is likely to benefit from the opinions expressed in this text?" (Riggins 1997, 3), one can also ask: "Which group is likely to benefit from the visual changes expressed in this image?"

Today the tiling causes the separate structure of the oblong stone to vanish into the elevated platform and into the overall shape of the temple (see Fig. 5.10).

FIGURE 5.10 The image in 2012 with the local priest Gopal Maharaj on the right. The oblong stone has been completely covered up

This invites the visitor's gaze to settle upon the heaps on top, which protrude out from the tiled surroundings. The additional attachment of facial components and the covering of other parts of the stone cluster with red and orange cloth also capture the visitor's gaze. This way of constructing the image does not mean that the (Zikri) Muslim history of the shrine, associated with the grave of a saintly figure, is completely eliminated. However, the shape of the rebuilt *sanctum* suggests that those parts that did not benefit the prevailing Hindu interpretation of the image—or the HSM's version of it—were backgrounded, while others that are more in concert with this concept were foregrounded. Through this process, the physical shape of the oblong stone, described in older accounts and frequently interpreted as the top of a grave, was made less prominent. On the other hand, parts of the *mūrti* that fit—in Lefebvre's terminology—the "imaginary of space" at the shrine were emphasized.

One must also consider that the descriptions quoted from Hart, Goldsmid, and Stein are not simple phenomenological accounts within a vacuum, but represent a certain discursive background in which these descriptions were written. In other words, all these authors operated as colonial masters under the guidance of locals or religious experts who influenced their writing. It is certainly not possible to completely grasp the meaning intended by any of these narratives since not even an extensive account of the social context could provide the means to fully understand their authors' intention (Skinner 1969, 46). However, all these authors felt inclined to describe the image in a certain way, which also cannot be ignored here. These descriptions of the *sanctum* as "tomb shaped" or as a "Muslim grave" do not appear in current accounts of the image, where such alternative interpretations are no longer present. I will pick up on this crucial issue again after I have evaluated the remaining sources.

Besides such considerations, the photograph Stein took of the image in 1943 leads to additional questions. The picture clearly shows the *dhūnī* that was in the center of the rectangular stone until the end of the 1990s. A *triśūla* (Skt.) is fixed in the front, and a stone that appears to be a *śiva liṅga* (Skt.) is visible in the back (see Fig. 5.11). No one from the HSM or from the local villages could remember having seen the image in such a form during their first visits to the shrine, and it was not possible to find anyone today who could recall a *śiva liṅga* on this spot. The globular stones, which today are decorated with representations of eyes and noses, are omitted from the picture on the left side. Apparently, the photographer did not deem the two round stones to be particularly important and opted to capture only the middle of the platform. From this choice, it seems that for the photographer, the center of attention was the *dhūnī*, together with the conical

FIGURE 5.11 Aurel Stein's shot of the image from around 1943

stone right behind it. This large stone was located directly in the middle of the platform until the 1940s but must have been removed at some later time. However, this stone should not be confused with the *liṅga* that was once planted a few meters away from the actual image, in front of the platform, which has in fact now been removed by the HSM. A description of this conical stone is found, for example, in Hart, who mentions that his Hindu companions called it "Sadasheo" (1839, 96). This *liṅga* was removed by the HSM in the 1990s and thrown into the Sharan Kund (Hin. refuge-pond),[27] which, before it dried up, was directly in front of the Hinglaj temple. The HSM's official reasoning for the choice is that the *liṅga* caused an obstruction for pilgrims to reach the shrine; however, one elderly HSM volunteer from Karachi told me that the *liṅga* had to be removed since it was a very graphic image of a penis that had disturbed the visitors (see Fig. 5.12).

27. This pond is also often called by different names like "*Kanyar Kun*" (Jajot 2011, 56) or "*Hinglaj Kund*" (Barhath 2006, 31).

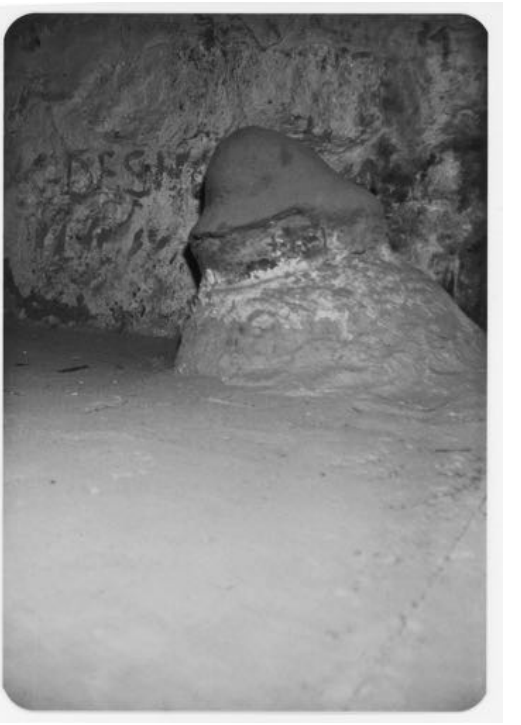

FIGURE 5.12 The *śiva liṅga* inside the Hinglaj temple that was removed by the HSM (courtesy of Badar Abro)

Dr. Nabi Bux Khan Baloch undertook the journey to Hinglaj in 1961. His account appears in the Sindhi journal *Mehrān*, which was published in 1970. Khan Baloch became interested in the place through the work of Sindhi poets such as Shah Abdul Latif (1689–1753) and Shah Inayatullah (1655–1718). This interest led him to organize a trip to the site for a group of people. His report is written through the eyes of an academic and an admirer of Sindhi culture and is a valuable piece describing the shrine twenty years after the visit of Aurel Stein. Baloch refers to the architecture of the temple and the platform (Sin. *chap*) inside, which had already been lined with timber by the time of his visit. Atop the platform were scattered several instruments used by the pilgrims for *pūjā*; Baloch estimated them to be around half a century old (Khan Baloch 1970, 132). Even though Baloch gives a rather extensive account of the valley, the temple, and the tunnel, he does not mention any image at the shrine's center. It is also important to note that, unlike the other writers before him, Baloch did not travel with Hindu pilgrims or any ritual experts who could elaborate on the rituals and mytho-historic narratives surrounding the shrine.

In this way, his account of the valley is a usefully distanced description, and it comes as no surprise that he writes that the group did not find any idol or picture of any deities at Hinglaj.

Badar Abro traveled to Hinglaj in 1988. In his 1991 Sindhi book *Hinglāj ai Lāhūt*, Abro, like other authors, does not mention any image in a lying position. In fact, he writes that the image does not bear any kind of human shape, but rather seems to be constructed out of three or four lumps. He mentions that on one side, six or seven *liṅgas* were kept, and that another one, about a foot tall, was located at the base of the platform, which is called "*sadā śivo*" (Sin.) (Abro 1991, 62f.). This *liṅga* is most likely the same as that described by Hart, which was eventually removed by the HSM in the mid-1990s. The photo of the *sanctum* appearing in Badar's book gives a clear view of the whole platform with the *dhūnī* in the middle and the *triśūla* on the right side (see Fig. 5.13).

The two globular stones on the left of the platform do not show any sign of eyes or other facial features yet. Another photo from Badar's visit shows the western side of the platform. Here, the two significant *piṇḍas* behind the *dhūnī* are clearly visible. However, there is no sign of the globular stone that was so evident in Stein's 1943 photograph (see Fig. 5.14). Even though both photos

FIGURE 5.13 The image of Hinglaj before the reconstruction work with the *dhūnī* in the middle of the stone (courtesy of Badar Abro)

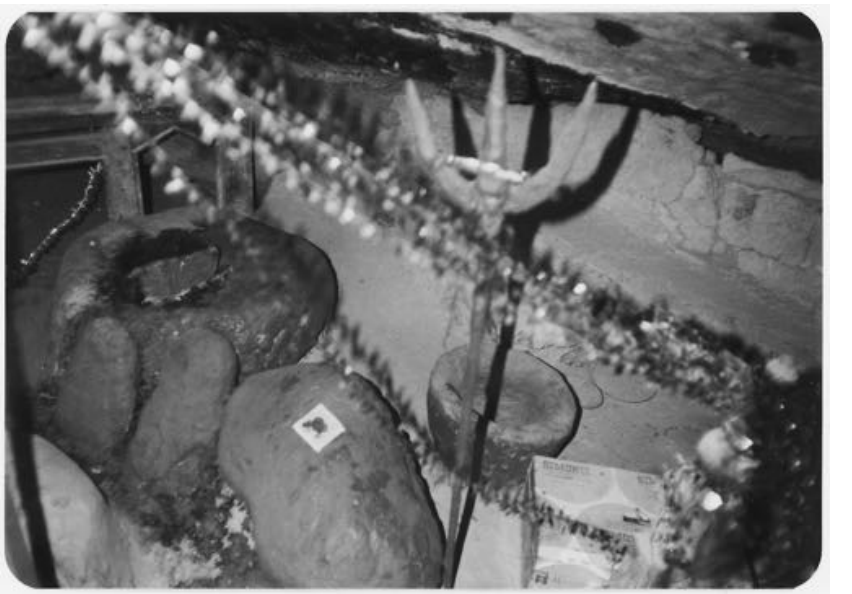

FIGURE 5.14 The western side of the image in the early 1990s (courtesy of Badar Abro)

were shot from the same vantage point, there are no traces of the *liṅga* in the later shot. Also, Abro's frontal shot does not show the *liṅga* at this place (see Fig. 5.13), nor does Avarji's picture from 1992 (see Fig. 5.9). The stone must therefore have been removed from its oblong stone base sometime between 1943 and the early 1990s.

Another Sindhi scholar, the already introduced Ishtiaq Ansari, also undertook the journey to Hinglaj, most likely some years later in the 1990s, shortly before the HSM began renovating the temple. Ansari's description places the main idol in the back (the south) of the platform, separated from the second face, the globular stone, which is also on top of the rectangular structure (Ansari 2001, 336). Ansari's drawing of the platform shows that the two conical stones in the back of the platform are clearly linked with each other, while the stones that now form the two faces are shown as separate from one another. Although Ansari's drawing lacks any great detail, it is interesting that he perceives the two globular stones as separate from each other and also not as the core element of the image (see Fig. 5.15).

The omission of certain features of the image, which are now perceived as its central aspects, does not necessarily mean that there was no religious imaginary that corresponded to the representation of the image today. In other words, the absence of a particular interpretation of the image in the

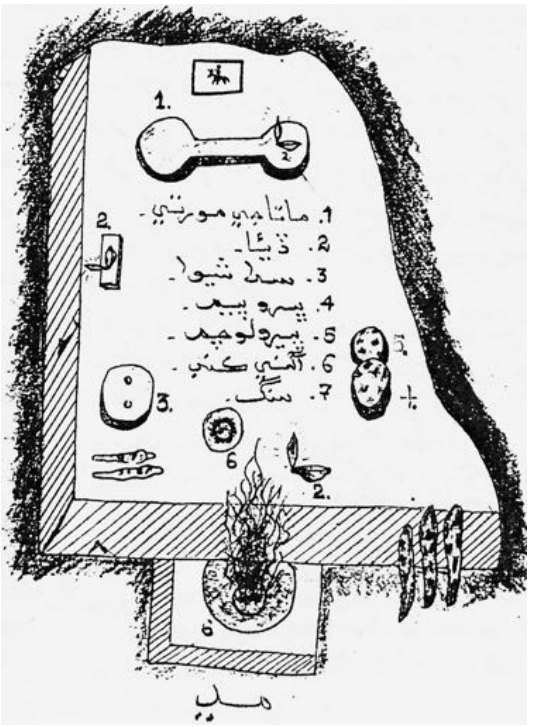

FIGURE 5.15 Ansari's sketch of the temple from the early 1990s (2001)

given sources does not necessarily mean that such an interpretation was not assumed by some devotees who came to the shrine; however, it does denote that before certain circumstances led to the shrine becoming a central stage for Pakistan's Hindu communities, there was no obvious and self-explanatory central image. With the growing influx of visitors, the HSM felt the need to change the image in a way that would lessen its ambiguity. Today, the temple organization interprets the refurbishing work as a way to crystalize the "actual" practice at the shrine. Due to the *svayaṃbhū* characteristic of the central image, however, work at the *sanctum* is often downplayed publicly.

5.6.3 Practice, Conceptualization, and Imaginary of Hinglaj

In analyzing all of these accounts, it becomes evident that the main focus of worship at the shrine, as well as the imaginary of the statue, changed significantly over the years and has only recently centered on the two faces at the platform's eastern side. Stein and Badar both focused on the western

part of the image in their accounts, assuming it to be the center of attention. The *dhūnī*, once in the middle of the oblong stone and in the center of many pictures, has been removed and the place where it was located overlaid with other material. The refurbishing work done by the HSM, in particular, aimed to solidify the different religious imaginaries of the *mūrti*. This new shape of the image, in turn, influences the ritual practices at the temple. As a result of the tiling, the two faces emerge as the main center of worship, while other parts of the image were literally covered over. The attachment of eyes and noses to the rectangular stones also foreground the notion of a lying Goddess. While previously the stone clusters could have been perceived as bearing no particular human shape (Abro 1991, 62), now the facial characteristics together with the human clothing donned by the image clearly emphasize an anthropomorphic figure.

As already mentioned, Lefebvre stresses in his work the idea of a mutual dependency of practices, conceptualization, and imaginary of space that together produce meaningful sites. I have suggested understanding this interdependent trinity as (ritual) practices, conceptual space, and religious imaginary, respectively, in the context of the Hinglaj shrine. These three moments have crucial heuristic value when analyzing the image. Looking at the *sanctum sanctorum* through the lens of *spatialization* shows how it has been produced out of a wider network of actors and institutions. Among all these, the notion of *svayaṃbhū* plays a particularly significant role, as we will see. The following unravels the image under the aspect of this interdependency to further analyze the formation of the *sanctum*.

1. The current image is a product of the continuous practices at the shrine—but also at other religious localities—through which it emerges in a particular shape. Repeated patterns of worship ask for certain facilities. The leveling of the area in front of the image, for example, aims to create space where pilgrims can sit and do *pūjā* or sing *bhajans*. The shifting of the *dhūnī* aimed for making the oblation easier and responded to the swelling numbers of religious practitioners inside the valley. These are but two conceptual reactions, which originate out of repeated practices, and, simultaneously, help solidify these in future. As one member of the HSM said in an interview, the constructional changes made around the image have been done with the purpose of making the worship (read: the ritual practices) of the Goddess easier. This is also true of the attachment of the two noses and pairs of eyes, which, according to the organization, are intended to help the devotee approach the divinity in a proper way and allow his or her gaze to wander in a certain direction. Here, conceptual space adapts to the spatial

practices, or, in other words, the temple committee—and to a certain extent the visitors at the shrine—have changed the image (mainly in the 1990s) to fit the practices around it.

2. It is obvious that conceptual space alters how the *sanctum* is commonly perceived these days. Here, the work of the Mandali and their design of the whole temple become important. The impact of the tiling inside it, for example the covering of an older inscription, has been described in detail. Conceptual spaces at Hinglaj aim to respond to practices and imaginaries at the shrine but at the same time also affect both of them. In the case of the image, the decision to cover up parts of the formation responded to a particular religious imaginary—a Lasi Lohana view of Hinglaj—and simultaneously also changed the practices by altering the spatial formations of the inner temple. Here, the aspect of hegemony is important since not all groups exercise equal control over the conceptual space of the image—this will become particularly important in the next chapter. Such planning, furthermore, is done in communication with other actors, such as the Balochistan government, which represents an important source of financial means for construction work at the temple. This cooperation creates an element of uncertainty within the conceptual design and limits the agency of the HSM, for example, by the difficulty of gathering funds for roads and shelters or a change in political patronage after an election.
3. There are manifold religious imaginaries that come together at Hinglaj. Like the above-mentioned truth-claims, religious imaginaries with regard to space, too, might be overlapping or opposing each other. Family traditions may be one such imaginary, or the protection of the *kul'devī*, as in the case of the Charan or the Brahmakshatriya *jāti* might be another. Importantly, they establish a connection between a group and the site. The *sanctum* as the central point of attraction plays an important role for this linkage. The obfuscation of the image's grave-like qualities through tiling over it erased many traces of the local (Zikri) Muslim religious imaginary and made the image "more Hindu" looking. Likewise, the notion that the stone heaps show a woman giving birth (Kshatriya 2005, 79) or depict the Goddess's abdomen were all but completely swept away in the conceptual refurbishing of the shrine. Such examples show how religious imaginaries influence spatial practices and conceptions of space. Both of these modes were altered to produce a coherent narrative at the shrine. As Lefebvre's approach emphasizes, such an influence is never only one-sided, but, in fact, these moments are interdependent. Religious sites tend to put a stronger emphasis on the moment of religious imaginary, which might at times overcome the other two. This is seen in the concept of *svayaṃbhū*—the

image's (and in fact the whole valley's) quality of having generated out of itself. At times, this notion is in conflict with the two other modes—especially the conceptual space—since it denies human agency at the shrine. To what extent the image has been altered over the past two hundred years, therefore, was often a moot point when talking to devotees and organizations about Hinglaj.

Again, it is important to note that none of these modes alone can account for the production of the image. To consider the *spatialization* of the *sanctum*, they must all be seen in relation to one another. The reconstruction work at the temple changed how devotees may physically approach the image and also how people mentally conceive it. The covering of certain parts and the emphasis on others has an impact on the religious imaginary in the same way it influences the practices at the shrine. Strictly speaking, the current perception of the religious spaces inside the Hinglaj Valley can only provide a snapshot of such continuous processes of *spatialization*. There is, however, also a state of affairs that increasingly tends toward an equilibrium in the trialectic between practice, conception, and imaginary. A few decades ago, there were no significant institutional means to bring about a "decontestation" (Freeden 2006) of these three modes, but today, many different actors help in solidifying this trinity. This is certainly due not only to the work of the HSM—although the Mandali occupies an important position—but also to the results of the amalgamated efforts of agents like the provincial government, the federal government, Hindu welfare organizations, authors, international clientele, television documentaries, and many others that attempt to smooth over the gaps between practices, conceptions, and imaginaries of Hinglaj in order to generate a coherent narrative at the shrine.

5.6.4 The *Garbha*: A History of the Mother's Womb

The primary feature of the journey to Hinglaj and the pilgrimage's *sine qua non* ritual is the crawling through a narrow U-shaped tunnel underneath the image of the Goddess, called the *garbha* (Hin. womb, lap), or sometimes the *garbhaguphā* (Hin. "womb-cave"). This circumambulation is said to be a rebirthing of the devotee out of the body of the Devi. Some reports also show that after coming out of this tunnel, devotees used to roll on the floor and make sounds like a newborn as part of the ritual (cf. Wilford 1851 and Jethamalani 1994). The merits and details of this rebirthing differ according to sectarian background or, simply, to individual belief. In most cases, however, the ritual is associated with purification and the repentance of sins.

As mentioned above, the platform now covered in tiles was originally built on the foundations of a small rock or mud hill (Hin. *miṭṭī kā ṭīlā*), the age of which is uncertain. Today, the tunnel running under the platform area is accessed through a small door on the left. At its tallest, this tunnel is no more than 90 centimeters high, and at certain points, it is barely large enough for a person to fit through. The passage leads underneath the image of the Goddess and wraps around the mud hill in a semicircular shape until it finally emerges out from under the platform through another small door on the right side (see Fig. 5.16).

The doors leading into the tunnel are usually locked, and visitors must ask the *pujārī* or the volunteer workers at the shrine to have them opened. At the time of the major *melā*, the doors are only open for a certain period of time in the middle of the night. The developments taking place in this part of the temple are particularly crucial since the tunnel and evidence of the associated rebirthing ritual are found throughout many historical sources and seemingly form one of the oldest and most central themes in the shrine's history (cf. Goldsmid 1863; Wilford 1851; Hart 1839; Shastri 1977). The rebirthing ritual continues to constitute the main focus of many travelogues written by national and international visitors (cf. Ratnu 2007; Barhath 2006; Lakhavat 2011).

Today, it is obvious that the tunnel was increasingly extended with masonry over the past few decades until it formed a complete "U" shape that could lead pilgrims underneath the image of the Goddess and around the mud hill. The

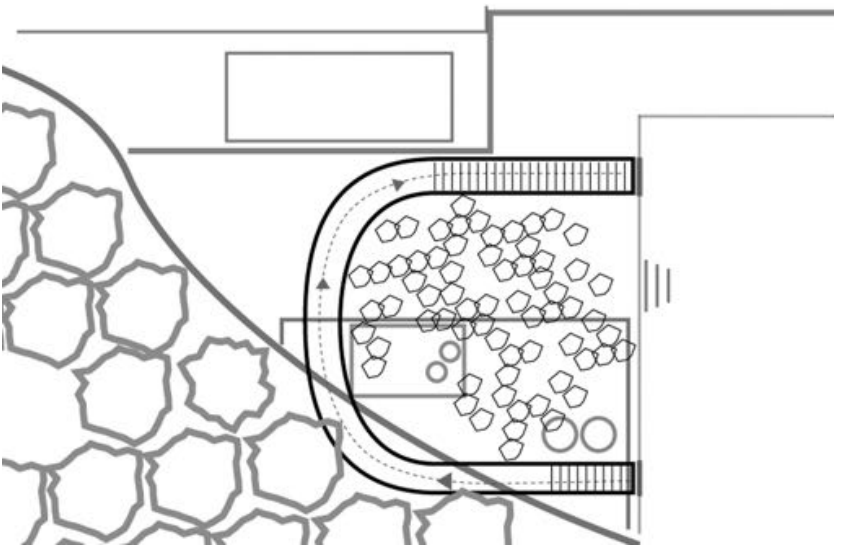

FIGURE 5.16 Overview of the *garbha* (design by Saboor Haider)

HSM's construction work in the early 1990s was merely the last of many layers of settings around the image; in 1943, Aurel Stein mentioned additional work that had already been done at the shrine (Stein 1943, 202).

No member of the HSM I spoke with knew the age of the masonry or of the construction around the tunnel, and some were reluctant to talk about the organization's involvement in the process. But while many new pilgrimage shelters and water tanks inside the valley bear a visible inscription somewhere mentioning who or which organization donated the money for its construction, aside from the ambiguous inscriptions mentioned earlier in this chapter, no such signs are found inside the temple. The different stages of the developments around the mud hill and the tunnel are difficult to peg along a historical timeline. However, one can clearly distinguish between the man-made work—however old it might be—and the natural cleavage in the stone of the mountain walls. Jajot also confirms this impression: "In former times the womb [of the Goddess] was into the mountain, now it has become fortified with stone"[28] (Jajot 2011, 56).

On entering the tunnel in its present-day condition through the left side, one is led along the mountainous wall of the cave with its various little holes and cavities typical of the valley.[29] One finds on the right side of the tunnel, by contrast, a stone and brick wall that, according to the resident *pujārī*, was built to stabilize the mud heap. On both sides—at the entrance (left door) and even more so toward the exit (right door) of the tunnel—the low roof is supported by wooden crossbeams. Some distance after entering the tunnel, these wooden beams give way to the bulging natural stone walls of the mountain, and the passage becomes narrower. This crevice in the rock appears to be the oldest part of the tunnel, which is located directly underneath, or very close to the oblong stone on which the image of the Goddess rests. For a couple of meters, the tunnel then follows the natural curve of the mountain wall, and on its left side there are no visible traces of additional masonry. However, at certain points, natural cavities appear to have been filled up with mortar or brick earth.[30] The natural overhanging stone ceiling does not form a fully

28. "*Pahle zamāne men pahāṛ men garbh thī ab pakkā banā diyā gayā hai*" (Urd.).

29. I myself crawled through the tunnel over a dozen times, and one time I took pictures with my camera. The information in this section of the chapter is based on that experience. The volunteers at the shrine allowed me to take photographs, but I had to promise not to publish them. However, Abro (1991) has published pictures of the tunnel.

30. There are many legends about pilgrims disappearing in the tunnel due to such cavities, which allegedly lead deeper into the mountain. I strongly doubt that these holes were once big enough for a human being to fit through. No one I spoke with had actually witnessed

enclosed tunnel at this point, and on the right side, rough masonry is visible. At the point where the tunnel begins to loop around, one finds a small cavity on the left, which is filled with stones and gravel. Here, the height of the ceiling also rises, which, I assume, indicates an old exit from the tunnel since it is here that the natural overhanging mountain roof gives way to the stone and brick wall and a wooden beam roof.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, Hart described the temple as a mud edifice that contained two rooms in which music was played. According to his account, a doorway opened to another room where the image of Hinglaj was found (Hart 1839, 95). Hart also describes a raised earthen platform "between which and the rock is a narrow passage forming the segment of a circle" (Hart 1839, 96). This is the earliest available description I found of the practice of *parikramā* (Hin. circumambulation) underneath the image and around the earthen platform. Hart's description of the tunnel forming a segment of a circle is unfortunately not enough to deduce the length of the passage. From his account of the rebirthing ritual a few pages later, it is still unclear how far the tunnel extended in the 1830s. On page 97, Hart writes:

> At midnight all the women and children were directed to bathe in the pool, and keeping on only sufficient clothing for the purpose of decency, went inside the building, from which all but the Agwas were excluded. They were then divested of all ornaments they had been unwise enough to retain on their persons (even the nose ring was obliged to be ransomed) and sent two by two, the right hand of one sister being placed on the leg of the other, on their hands and knees into the narrow opening in the rock under the platform. On coming out on the opposite side they again bathed, and then resumed their clothes.

Even though Hart's use of the words "the opposite side" could indicate an exit location similar to that found today, it could also imply that the tunnel in 1839

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such an incident, but the idea seems to persist among pilgrims at the shrine, and over the past few years, I have often stumbled across it. In 2012, when the Mandali had started building a new road to the shrine and the front courtyard of the temple was being cemented to accommodate the crowds at the annual *melās*, workers found a new cave toward the east of the temple that had been buried under the sand. Gopal proudly showed it to me and wondered about the depth of the cave, which was not ascertainable at that time. The hollow was indeed impressive, leading several meters into the mountain; but even so, it is hard to imagine that someone could disappear into such an opening. My guess is that the earthwork might simply have been made by some artisan at an unknown time to create an easier passage.

ended where the natural overhanging stone, which is a part of the natural mountain wall, is now attached to the artificial brick wall. However, there is also additional information that could shed some light on the question. Hart describes the image as resting on a 20 foot by 12 foot "mud edifice" some pages earlier (Hart 1839, 95). If this quantitative measure is laid over the ground plan of the temple as it is today, these dimensions match approximately to the end of the natural overhanging mountain wall in the north. Since the cave walls have not shifted, it is very likely that in the mid-nineteenth century, the tunnel opened up on the northern side. This description can be compared with that of Goldsmid, who visited the place twenty years later.

> The shrine was on a kind of raised mud platform, perhaps three feet from the level. On either side was a door barely large enough to admit a middle-sized man creeping in on his hands and feet. The proper thing to do was to enter the door on the left, grovel along on the chest and stomach to a hollow in the rock where there was room to stand erect, and resume the creeping position until egress was obtained by the door on the opposite side, thus completing a semicircle. (Goldsmid 1863, 208)[31]

Here, it is obvious that Goldsmid found a semicircular tunnel already in place by the time of his visit to the shrine and thus that the "U" shape of the tunnel can be dated to at least the mid-nineteenth century. In Hart's account, it is not fully evident if the tunnel had already gained its current shape or if it then opened on the north side, which, as a close analysis of the shrine's architecture and the tunnel underneath shows, it certainly once did. This is evident, because at one point, the natural rift from the mountain wall simply ends, and the man-made masonry begins. Thus, it is likely that in some undefined past, the tunnel was much shorter and was not in its current "U" shape.

In the middle of the twentieth century, the allegedly natural tunnel looping beneath the image of the Goddess had already been supported and stabilized with man-made means. This could have happened at the same time as the construction of the outer stone wall or at some other point in the eighty years between Goldsmid's and Stein's visits. From videotapes made around the end of the 1980s, one can see that the HSM later extended the tunnel on both sides to create the full "U" shape under the platform.

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31. At no point today does the tunnel open to a cave where a man could stand up straight. If Goldsmid's account is accurate, then this would again show the massive changes the tunnel has undergone since the nineteenth century.

5.7 *The Ponds and Topographical Changes Inside the Valley*

The small stream and the system of freshwater pools inside the valley it provides must have been a relief for many travelers after their journey through the dry and barren landscape of Balochistan. While the system of ponds is not extensively mentioned in the older literature, today these ponds form an important network of connected freshwater sources, each of which holds its own place within the sacred geography of the valley. While some *kuṃḍs* (Hin. pond) have disappeared over time due to drought or the damming of the water flow by debris, others are said to have existed continuously since mythological times.

Sharan Kund, for example, was once a pool lying directly in front of the temple of Hinglaj (see Fig. 5.17). It was then the last place for a purification bath before the pilgrims entered into the *garbha* of the Goddess (Lakhavat 2011, 53; Kaviya 2006, 3). Devotees would submerge three times under the fresh water together with their chosen *śaraṇ'bhāi/bahan* (Barhath 2006, 31) before

FIGURE 5.17 Sharan Kund in front of Hinglaj in 1943 (Stein 1943)

they would be permitted to enter the Goddess's abode. As mentioned above, however, over the past few years, this pond gradually filled up with debris and by 2009 was barely visible. The foreman responsible for the construction work in the valley mentioned that he had redug the *kuṃḍ* several times until the HSM decided it was too much effort to maintain the pond. So, while in 2009 it was still obvious that a large pool had once been at this place, by 2011, the area was covered over with concrete, making evident the HSM's lack of any intention to dig it up again.

The events surrounding Sharan Kund show the close connection between practice, conception, and the imaginary of a religious space. Sharan Kund had been a significant stop on the ritual journey to Hinglaj, and the bath in the pool just before entering the temple is frequently mentioned in literature (Samaur 1999, 506; Joshi 2010, 22; Jethamalani 1994, 8). The gradual drying up of the pond and the subsequent ceasing of the purification practice in the pool first triggered efforts by the HSM to prevent its desiccation. But when these efforts seemed increasingly in vain, an organizational explanation incorporated the event into the official corpus of mytho-historic narratives inside the valley. The impact of a change in practice through topographical developments had to be tackled within the imaginary of space. The following is how Gopal Maharaj, the local priest at Hinglaj, explains the pond's disappearance:

> You know there is a story behind the Sharan Kund that had been right here in front of the temple. It was the second day of *ʿīd* and the valley was full of people. I was at Til Kund then, when I heard that a child had drowned right here in Sharan Kund. People pulled the child out of the pond and brought it to Karachi, but it was too late—the child died. This was at the time when I used to be the *pujārī* at the Makli temple in Thatta, before I came here. On the twelfth day after the child's death, its mother came to Thatta. She started to cry in front of the Goddess' image and yelled: "What kind of Mother are you? What kind of Mother are you? People carry their dead to you and you bring them back to life—I send my healthy child to you and how do you give it back to me? Did I send a dead child to you? It did not do any harm! If you want to punish your children, then punish all of them—why did my child get killed? This is not fair—now close this pool that drowned my child. I do not want to see it anymore!" After only fifteen days there was so much rain that a huge landslide filled the pond. This was only a few years ago. I was in Makli then when the child's mother spoke to the Goddess and I was here the day the child drowned. People talk a lot about what has happened, but none of their stories are true—it was only since a

> mother cried in front of the Goddess, because she had lost her child, that the pond disappeared.

With this story, the *pujārī* incorporates the event into a coherent narrative. Gopal Maharaj rearticulates contesting elements into a seamless, logical explanation, which again balances the relationship between practice, conceptualization, and religious imaginary. The significant dislocation in practice was first tackled by the construction work of the HSM. In its role as influential planners or architects of the valley, the organization repeatedly tried to dig the pond back up, but in vain. The mytho-historical explanation by one of the main religious authorities at the shrine helped to once more create a harmonious narrative in which the ceasing of the purification practice is the work of the Goddess and hence part of the divine will.

5.7.1 Til Kund

Upon entering the valley farther past the Hinglaj temple at a short distance to the west, one finds a pond called Til Kund (in Sindhi also Taru Kund). Til Kund and other nearby ponds in the northwest of the valley are not, however, mentioned in any older textual sources that I have found so far. Between 2009 and 2015, Til Kund was always full of fresh water and partly covered with reeds. The bottom of the pond is not visible from its banks; the *pujārī* mentioned that some years earlier, a mother and her four children drowned in the pond. Ansari writes that this pond was once the meditation place of Shiva (2001, 340), which, as people at the shrine say today, purified its water.

The main ritual practice at the Til Kund consists of the washing of *til* (Hin.), black sesame seeds that pilgrims either bring themselves or receive from the *pujārī*. After the *pūjā* at Hinglaj and the subsequent spiritual rebirth out of the Goddess's womb, the *yātrīs* travel on to Til Kund. There, the seeds are washed in the pond's water and rubbed between the pilgrims' palms. As a result, their naturally black color fades and turns white. The seeds' reaction to the washing plays a crucial role in the current pilgrimage system. According to the percentage of seeds that have turned white, the pilgrim can determine the extent to which his or her soul has been purified and how much still remains stained. So, for example, if a quarter of the seeds stay black, the pilgrim's soul has now become 75 percent pure. If the pilgrim is not satisfied with the outcome, he or she can return to the shrine and perform the offerings again. The pilgrims may also return to the Mother's *garbha* to be reborn yet again. This process can be repeated until the water of Til Kund washes all the *til* seeds completely white, indicating that the soul is completely purified. But people at

the shrine also say that there is a danger involved: those who are too eager to leave Hinglaj with a completely pure soul might thereby sin with their greed and thus end up with even fewer white sesame seeds than before.

5.7.2 Brahma, Kir, and Kali Kund

A little farther up the valley, to the northwest, the pilgrim finds three more Kunds connected by a small stream: Brahma, Kir, and Kali Kund. These names frequently change, and sometimes other names are used to imply the presence of a certain deity. In addition, one name is often used for two pools, so there is no uniform relationship between the names and specific ponds in this series. The names I cite here were used by Abro in his book *Hinglāj ai Lāhūt* (Abro 1991, 66), and so I will follow his example. Within the ritual journeys in the valley, however, they do not play a very important role.

Kir Kund is actually only the small, fresh reserve filled by a drizzle of water from a ledge on the western side of the valley. These drops are considered to have the power of healing all kinds of eye disease; the devotee seeking healing is supposed to stand beneath the ledge and allow the drops to fall directly into his or her eyes. Legend has it that if all the previous rituals have been performed with faith and piety, the drops will cure any kind of eye disease.

Another of these ponds, Brahma Kund, is said to have been named after Brahma, who had sat there in deep mediation for thousands of years. Kali Kund is a small pool just above Brahma Kund, which feeds into it from above. Here the pilgrims are supposed to step into the water and drink from the *chaśmah* (Urd. spring). This water is said to heal all kinds of diseases. The (Zikri) Muslim tradition at the shrine claims that this is the place where Eve fell from paradise and later became known as Hinglaj (Abro 1991, 66).

5.7.3 The Way to Anil Kund

Today, Anil Kund (often also called Aṇīl Kuṃḍ and Alīl Kuṃḍ) is one of the more important ponds within the sacred geography of Hinglaj.[32] The fairly deep, clear water upwelling is situated on the top of a mountain and is only accessible through a long, two-and-a-half-hour ascent by foot which, due to the burning heat during daylight hours, is often started before sunrise. Until his

32. Some accounts state that the whole area is called Chaurasi, including Anil Kund, and the three *pūjā* places within are connected to Guru Goraknath, Guru Nanak, and Rama. Others say that Chaurasi is only the name of the pond on top of the hill chain.

death in the late 1990s, Dost Mohammad guided the pilgrims through this steep and challenging landscape, explaining the various sites along the way (Jethamalani 1994, 9).[33] This out-of-the-way location provides Anil Kund with a potent role within the valley's religious imaginary. For many visitors, the difficult climb appears to contain certain characteristics of hardship and kinesthetic experience typically associated with the traditional *yātrā* (see Chapter 3). As alluded to above, visitors at Hinglaj often claim that Anil Kund has now become the "real" *tīrtha*, the present-day abode of the Goddess who retreated high up into the mountains to escape the tiresome noise and masses of people now overrunning her temple in the valley. This explanation connects the traditionally understood necessity of some kinesthetic element in the journey to the present time, where one can easily travel to the shrine by car or bus. In the case of reaching Anil Kund, as in older oral traditions and travelogues, one must once again make a physical effort to acquire the Goddess's blessing.[34]

Today, many different stories exist about Anil Kund (or Chaurasi). The local tradition considers Anil Kund to be a holy pond that carries the water of the Ganges, explained by the following story. Once Shiva saved the earth from destruction by taming the waters of the River Ganges with the help of his long locks of hair (Wilkins 2003, 467). He also used to come to the Hinglaj mountains for the solitude necessary for his meditation, and so some of the water from the Ganges also found its way from his hair into the hollow at Anil Kund. This is why the water is considered as pure as the waters of the Ganges. In the local Sindhi (Lohana) tradition, pilgrims must ascend to Anil Kund after they have emerged from the Goddess's lap in order to successfully complete their *yātrā* (Jethamalani 1994, 8).

Pilgrims from Gujarat tell another story. In the time when the Goddess Hinglaj was still present at the shrine, all the holy rivers, including the Ganges, the Sarasvati, the Kaveri, and others, assembled together to meet and worship her. Altogether, nine hundred rivers came together here to form Anil Kund, making a bath in the pond especially auspicious. In other accounts, the number of rivers convening at Anil Kund is eighty-four thousand—thus the alternate name, Chaurasi (Hin. <*caurāsī*> eighty-four). The legend says that through this congregation of rivers, Anil Kund possesses the purest water on

33. At the time of my visit in 2012, the tour to Chaurasi was still a family tradition and was guided by his son, Hussain.

34. This story also mirrors spatial and temporal tales in which the Goddess lives on the top of the mountain or on an island in the Arabian Sea and comes only for a certain time during the day.

Earth. Thus, the tradition presented by the Gujarati pilgrims claims that one must bathe in its waters to purify the body before proceeding to enter the Goddess's lap.

In the novel *Marutīrtha Hiṃglāj* (Abadhut 1964), Abadhut describes another *tīrtha* atop a mountain in the valley, which he calls "*ākāś gaṃgā*" ("heavenly Ganges" Abadhut 1964, 213; see also Shastri 1977, 56). From his description of the route and the rituals to be performed there, it becomes clear that the group is on its way to what in other traditions is called Chaurasi or Anil Kund. Abadhut also mentions that at this place, a plant grows that is particularly good for curing eye diseases (Abadhut 1964). As I have mentioned, today, pilgrims believe the water of Kir Kund to be the primary remedy for eye diseases, and I have not heard any particular mention recently of the restorative properties of Anil Kund's waters with respect to such diseases. In my opinion, this shows how certain tropes migrate around the valley of Hinglaj over time, becoming associated with different locations during different periods. Due to the scarcity of visitors—at least between 1965 and the end of the 1980s—and due to the wide variation in the communities that visited Hinglaj, names and practices could not be rigidly attached to certain locations in the valley but traveled around it with the passage of time. With the institutionalization of the pilgrimage and increasing numbers of publications about Hinglaj, particular elements—here, the alleged healing ability of Kir Kund's waters—have become fixed to certain places and are now uncontested.

The north side of the valley, in particular the journey up to Chaurasi, is characterized by additional connections to mytho-historic events within the broader Hindu tradition. Such associations of localities with supralocal mytho-historic narratives are quite common and create a kind of "duplication" or "multiplication" within the sacred landscapes of South Asia (Eck 1998). Three locations on this mountain are particularly important: the *dhūnī* of Guru Gorakhnath, the engraved footsteps of Guru Nanak, and the resting place of Rama (Sin. *rām jharoku*). Hart also describes the ascent into the mountains and mentions all of these places (Hart 1839, 99). The fireplace of Goraknath dates back to the long-standing tradition of Nath Yogis who made the journey to Hinglaj (Briggs 1938).[35] Lakhavat addresses this, stating that two texts describe the pilgrimage of Guru Gorakhnath to Hinglaj: the *Gorakh Caritra* and the *Gorakhpurāṇa* (Lakhavat 2011, 80). The hollowed-out footsteps

35. It is yet another sign of the breaking of the connection between the Nath *saṃpradāy* and Hinglaj after Partition that no one at the shrine mentioned to me a link between Chaurasi and the eighty-four Siddhas who are so significant within the Nath tradition.

of Guru Nanak connect Hinglaj to the Sikh and Nanak *paṃth* (Hin. sect) traditions. As already mentioned in Chapter 2, many middle- and upper-class Hindus in Sindh are followers of the Nanak *paṃth*. It is again Lakhavat who tries to provide evidence for the guru's journey to Hinglaj. He publishes a map from the *Atlas Travels of Guru Nanak* showing a route allegedly traveled by Nanak on his way to Mecca on which he passes by the shrine in Balochistan. For Lakhavat, this provides sufficient proof of Nanak's presence in Hinglaj, and he concludes that the footprints found in the valley are proof of this visit (Lakhavat 2011, 76). The third significant place is called *rām jharoku*, which literally means "Rama's window" or "veranda" but which in the local mythology refers to something like a reception hall. In Hindi/Urdu, the site is also called *rām baiṭhak* (Hin.), Rama's seat. The place is visible when looking up from the Hinglaj shrine at the bottom of the valley and is often mentioned in the literature (cf. Abadhut 1964, 212; Hart 1839, 80; Ansari 2001, 338). Its significant feature is the imprint of a sun and a moon on the side of the mountain, supposedly etched there by Rama after he completed his journey to Hinglaj to receive purification for the sin of killing a Brahmin (see Chapter 3). The place is said to be unreachable by mortals and indeed looks quite inaccessible from the bottom of the valley, though it is possible to climb up there. At one point, the HSM had even put up a ladder, which helped pilgrims to climb down to it from the highest edge of the mountain. Harsh weather conditions, however, demolished it, and during my time at the shrine, we had to follow a long and exhausting detour over the northwestern side of the mountain. From a small platform underneath the main ledge, the symbols for sun and moon are clearly visible on the overhanging wall. Unfortunately, both are filled with some sort of colorful spackle, which makes it impossible to see how deep (or even if) they are carved into the mountain (see Fig. 5.18).

Members of the HSM did not know anything about who might have been responsible for the symbols' current shape. The most intriguing aspect of these symbols is the mention of such a place by Ctesias in his work *Indica*. There, Ctesias describes a place in the desert and some kind of ritualistic behavior related to the sun and the moon. He also says that one could reach this area within fifteen days from "Mont Sardo"—probably a mountain where the Sardo gem was found.[36] Charles King judges these mountains to be fifteen days' walking distance from the desert between Cutch and Multan (1865,

36. "*Les Indiens, dit-il, sont les plus justes des hommes; il parle de leurs us et coutumes et de ce territoire consacré en plein désert qu'ils honorent sous le nom du Soleil et de la Lune; on y parvient en quinze journées à partir du mont Sardo*" (Ctesias 1959, 136).

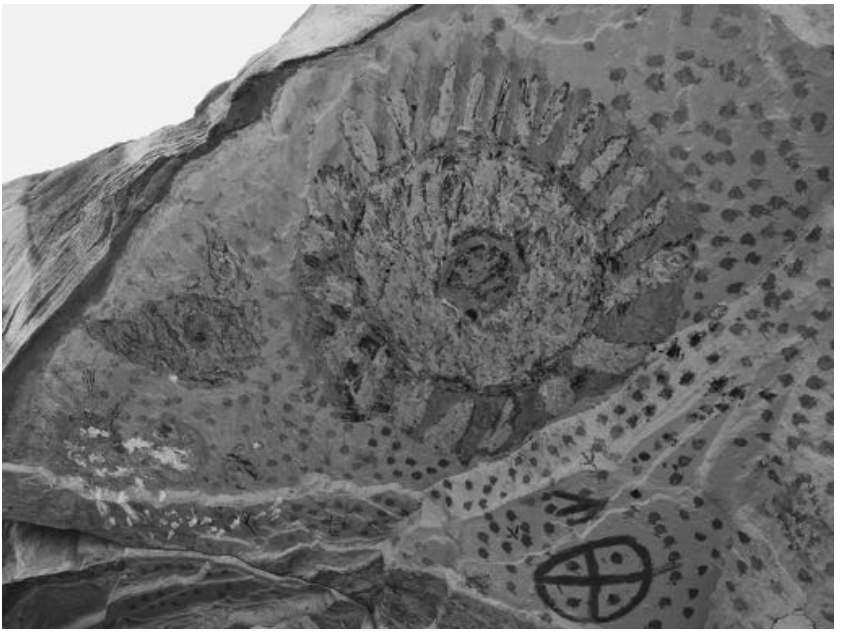

FIGURE 5.18 The symbol of sun and moon in the Hinglaj Valley

297). This certainly could be a reference to the valley of Hinglaj/Nani. To conclusively establish this connection, however, an archeological survey of the signs and their age would be necessary. In general, these three locations in the northern mountain range and their focus on Gorakhnath, Guru Nanak, and Rama connect the sacred geography of Hinglaj to the broader religious traditions of South Asia.

There is one final point to be added here about Chaurasi. In front of the Hinglaj temple there is a huge boulder named Chaurasi ka Cakka (Hin. *caurāsī kā cakkā* "the Chaurasi stone" or alternatively *caurāsī kā cakkar* "the Chaurasi tour"). Gopal Maharaj tells this story about the stone. In ancient times, *munis* and *ṛṣis* (Hin. sages, wise men) would meditate in the northern mountain range. For this reason, common people could no longer visit Chaurasi since they did not dare disturb the sages. As a result, the pilgrims asked the Goddess to arrange some other way for them to receive the merit of having completed the full journey. So, the Goddess caused a huge boulder to fall in front of the temple, and she told her devotees that if they were unable to reach Chaurasi, then they should instead make seven circuits (Hin. *cakkar lagānā*) around the stone and would thereby gain the same merit as if they had taken a bath there. Another story says that Guru Gorakhnath himself took the stone from somewhere around Anil Kund and brought it to this place (Jethamalani 1994, 8).

Nowadays, elderly and handicapped people who are unable to make the arduous climb to Chaurasi use the stone as a proxy to acquire a similar benefit as from a bath in the mountain pond.

5.8 Astola Island

Astola Island is the westernmost stop mentioned in reports describing the traditional pilgrimage. Today, however, Astola no longer plays a significant role within the pilgrimage network. The island is located in the Arabian Sea, between the two ports of Ormara in the east and Pasni in the west. It is located about 40 kilometers away from the Makran shore. Hughes writes that it is called "Satadip" by Hindus and "Habtala" by the local Balochis (Hughes 1877, 154). Goldsmid gives the names "Ashtola" and "Haftola" respectively (Goldsmid 1863, 203). Eggermont states that the island has been mentioned in various Greek sources under the names "Asthala," "Carnine," and "Nosala" (Eggermont 1975, 81). He also records a legend about the island found in the work of Arrianus (AD 96–180). Once a Nereid lived on Astola, who tricked sailors into coming to the island and on their arrival turned them into fish. The sun got irritated with the nymph and so told her to leave. The Nereid agreed, but also requested the sun to take away the spell that she was under. The sun agreed and lifted the spell, which also freed the sailors and they all turned back into humans, thus creating the people later called the fish-eaters (Eggermont 1975, 81–82).

Masson mentions that many pilgrims extended their journey after Hinglaj toward the island of Satadip, which they deemed to be extremely praiseworthy (Masson 1977, 391–392). Hughes elaborates that the island is important for Hindu pilgrims and also reports a saying that he found in Goldsmid: "*Sat pahar satadip men; athon pahar Hinglaj,*"[37] which he translates as: "Seven divisions of time in Satadip, the eighth in Hinglaj" (Hughes 1877, 154). Hart, as usual, gives the most detailed account and writes that "Sata Deveep," as he calls it, is considered to be the favorite residence of the Goddess. This relates to the idea found among pilgrims that the Goddess moves between the Hinglaj Valley and the island, where she resides for the largest part of the day, for seven "pruhurs" (also from Hin. *pahar*, a three-hour period) (Hart 1839, 98). Toward the end of his account, Hart fleshes out the island's importance for the pilgrims. According to his informants, the place is dedicated to the Goddess Kali, and goats are sacrificed at a particular spot on the island. He further describes Astola as a mere "uninhabited rock, upwards of a mile in circumference, on

37. Probably from Hin. "*sāt pahar satdīp, āṭhoṃ pahar hiṁglāj*."

which neither water nor wood is to be found" (Hart 1839, 105). To reach the place, the *yātrīs* take boats from nearby ports, or even set out from Karachi. Hart also mentions that it is not the custom to stay at the island and that no pilgrim dares to remain there at night (Hart 1839, 105).

Today, because of the military presence in the Arabian Sea, pilgrims rarely visit Astola Island. Some members of the HSM tried to organize a trip to the island with the help of the military in 2012 but did not succeed, and I do not know if such a tour has been successfully organized since then. Furthermore, not many visitors at the Hinglaj shrine these days know about the island, but the few who do portray it as the "actual" seat of the Goddess who nowadays only rarely resides at Hinglaj. One pilgrim mentioned that the island is the place where the Goddess's *brahmarandhra* is found, while at Hinglaj it is actually her womb (Hin. *kokh*) that fell to earth. He also added that this is why pilgrims can be reborn at Hinglaj and that he never saw anybody being born from a woman's head. Today there are only a few ruins of a Kali temple on the island.[38]

5.9 Conclusion

The ritual activities and their connected mytho-historic narratives on the way to and inside the Hinglaj Valley show how a regional topography combines with local and supralocal mythology into the sacred geography of the *yātrā*. Even though an array of stops (*paṛāv*) along the route from Karachi to Hinglaj have been documented over the past two hundred years, a conspicuous decline in the quantity and complexity of these ritual stops has occurred over the past few decades. Yet over this same time period, certain localities have gained more elaborate ritual practices and have become increasingly central to the pilgrimage. Such developments are particularly visible inside the valley of Hinglaj, which undoubtedly gained prominence from the construction of the MCH. Within just a couple of decades, the local environment has had to adapt to soaring numbers of visitors—from merely a few thousand a year to over forty thousand on a single weekend in the spring. Such significant changes have not only influenced the infrastructure and the landscape but have also had an impact on the sacred topography of the valley. Over this time, certain Hindu communities have brought new statues and related myths to the valley, while the temple organization constructed new routes to the shrine and altered the topography by filling up or digging new ponds. Many alternations to

38. See http://web.archive.org/web/20060117133655/http://www.ramsar.org/ris/ris_pakistan_astola.htm#19.

customs, such as a new mode of approaching the Goddess's image inside the temple, have emerged out of the interactions between organizations that are active at the shrine and the site's topographical necessities.

To understand these developments, inspired by the work of Lefebvre, I have suggested approaching Hinglaj not merely as a religious space but also as a space of religious *spatialization*, where practices, concepts, and imaginaries of space constantly work together. These three modes are mutually interdependent and influence each other via, in the words of Shields, a "three-way-dialectic" (Shields 1998, 120). But this relationship between the three need not necessarily be completely equal and balanced. As I have sought to show here, religious sites, in particular, tend to prioritize the moment of religious imaginary, where images of continuity and stability are considered as defining spatial practices or the representations of space. In other words, the moment of religious imaginary aims to dominate the trinity and attempts to explain a site's *spatialization*. At Hinglaj, for example, this process is seen in the notion of *svayaṃbhū*, which is also largely responsible for the site's cultural capital and which gains validity through the obfuscation of the site's history and course of development. The *svayaṃbhū* character of the religious imaginary distinguishes Hinglaj from other religious places in the Pakistani-Hindu landscape and ignores the involvement of human actors in this production of space.

The single most important change made to the Goddess's image was certainly the tiling of the oblong stone, which led to the subsequent backgrounding of the visual impression of a Muslim gravestone. While Hart, Goldsmid, and Stein describe the *sanctum* as a rectangular stone resembling the form of a Muslim grave with some "diminutive domes" (Goldsmid 1863, 208), on top, the tiling of the oblong stone shifted the attention from the structure as a whole to the stone heaps on top, now emphasized as comprising the Goddess's image. Fairclough offers a description of power as "*controlling and constraining the contributions of non-powerful participants*" (Fairclough 2001b, 38f.), which is illustrative in this case. Here, it is the HSM, as the main executor of reconstruction work at the temple, that constrains the contribution of the shrine's (Zikri) Muslim past by backgrounding—literally covering up—the oblong stone.

This development goes hand in hand with a general "Hinduization" of the shrine that began just a few decades ago and has gradually claimed the valley and the shrine as Hindu religious space. Since Hindu organizations—foremost the HSM—firmly control the representations of space in the area, their interpretations of what is seen and should be seen around the image currently prevail. Due to their lack of control over the renovations, the Zikri community has had few chances to establish their interpretation of the image at the shrine. A fact that certainly also has to do with the lack of educational, infrastructural,

and organizational means among the Makrani Zikri community. This primacy of a Hindu interpretation was facilitated through certain factors such as the wide international attention the shrine received after the construction of the MCH, political support for the HSM by the Balochistan provincial government, and the willingness of the Pakistani-Hindu community to accept Hinglaj as one of their main gathering places and as a symbol of unity.

The process of *spatialization* at Hinglaj also flows from the efforts of certain actors—in the material presented here, mainly that of the HSM—to stabilize the exchange between the three modes: practice, conceptualization, and imaginary. This naturally results in the favoring of a certain perspective of the shrine and its associated narratives and rituals. The more coherent the interaction between these three modes, the more solidified and unopposed the produced *spatiality* will eventually be. If, for example, the conceptual space is able to translate the language of an imaginary and simultaneously respond to the practice at the shrine, the result will be the production of a coherent socioreligious space. However, resistance may also emerge from any of these three modes, which may undermine this *spatiality*. One mode might become hegemonic at times, exerting a dominating influence upon the two others. I presented an example of this with the planned construction of a dam in the Hingol, which would have led to the flooding of access roads leading to the shrine. Here, the WAPDA's spatial conception—economic and not sacred—would have significantly altered the practices and eventually also the religious imaginary at Hinglaj. The building of a bridge over the River Hingol also modified the spatial practices and definitively influenced the choosing of a date for the main *melā* in the Hindu calendar. I also have presented several examples of how the religious imaginary, or the spaces of representation, altered the two other modes of production, among them through the concept of *svayaṃbhū*. It can be said that the solidification of the religious space at Hinglaj occurs because of a well-balanced and stable relationship of the three modes of production. If the practice, conceptualization, and imaginary all articulate one coherent narrative, then opposition against such modes of *spatialization* is difficult.

So, while in this chapter I focused on the description of the various stops on the pilgrimage and their (often very recent) alteration, I will next turn to the ways in which Hindu organizations, foremost the HSM, are helping to produce particular rules and codes of conduct inside the valley that not only change the environment but also effectively induce certain behaviors.

6

Solidifying Hinglaj: Striving for a Uniform Tradition

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will describe the role of Hinglaj as a part of the larger Pakistani-Hindu tradition, aiming to show how the site has increasingly become a unifying socioreligious public space for myriad diverse Hindu communities. As shown in previous chapters, some form of ritual journey to Hinglaj has existed since around the fourteenth century (Westphal and Westphal-Hellbusch 1976, 114). Although the precise age of the shrine will remain unknown until proper archeological research is conducted at the site, it is safe to say that Hinglaj has attracted pilgrims from all over the subcontinent for several centuries. Their experiences live on in oral traditions, for example, among the bards of Rajasthan in modern travel accounts, such as the work of Abadhut from Bengal, and even in the writings of colonial authors. Due to the heterogeneity of these sources, composed at different times and in different languages, it comes as no surprise that they do not present a coherent narrative of the Hinglaj tradition. Starting with its (re-) institutionalization in 1986, however, various actors began to seek a "decontestation" (Freeden 2006) of the contradicting myths and traditions at the shrine. In this chapter, I document the operational means with which Hindus in Pakistan today seek to solidify a homogenous narrative connected to the shrine and its resident Goddess.

The temple's growing popularity has created an ever-broadening platform for actors wishing to disseminate a particular interpretation of the site. Today, the temple of Hinglaj attracts thousands of visitors from all over the country on Hindu and public holidays. As a result of this broad interest, the site has become a working ground for many Hindu organizations that take advantage

of the crowds to approach visitors and inform them about their organizational activities. As suggested in the foregoing chapters, without a doubt, one of the most visible and influential of these agents is the local temple committee, the Hinglaj Sheva Mandali (HSM), whose tireless attempts to propagate a particular narrative and redesign the temple accordingly aim to solidify a particular set of histories and rituals in the valley. Although its members were never directly involved in composing and publishing texts, blogs, or ritual manuals, their experiences are often quoted by writers in Sindhi, Hindi, and Urdu and frequently serve as a point of reference on recent developments and organizational issues (Ratnu 2007; Lakhavat 2011; Jethamalani 1994). Thus, the HSM not only has local influence in regulating the flow of information, ritual practices, and mobility inside the valley but indirectly also has a say in publications about the shrine having a broader reach.[1]

In seeking to solidify a set of truth-claims at the shrine, the HSM has employed a number of strategies designed to nudge visitors into conformity. While the modes of spatializing the tradition have already been introduced in Chapter 5, for some years now, the HSM has perpetuated a set of rules and regulations during the annual festivals with the goal of fashioning a certain behavior among visitors. According to the organization's spokespersons, these regulatory norms serve merely as suggestions and are never strictly enforced. Yet, such rules do ultimately shape the behavior of the visitors and even the valley's landscape in keeping with the religious imaginary of the HSM and a few prolific writers. Within this process, certain ritual practices and narratives are singled out and either condemned as improper Hindu practices or emphasized as proper ones. Here, Hinglaj serves as an important platform from which the temple committee and other organizations are able to organize and structure different realities among today's Pakistani-Hindu communities. Understandably, these prescriptions lead to friction with other communities that have different understandings of meaning and practice at the site.

Many communities claim Hinglaj as a ritual space in their own tradition, refusing to follow the particular guidelines perpetuated by the HSM and the Lasi Lohana community. Smaller groups and individuals, however, lack the Mandali's influence and thus the ability to spread their own perception of the

1. It is difficult to measure the influence of such texts and ritual manuals on the shrine and its practices. However, in the many conversations I have had with visitors at the shrine, I have often heard them refer to one or the other text that "should be available" and which could answer all of my questions. So while I doubt that many visitors at the shrine of Hinglaj read these texts and manuals themselves, religious authorities often seem to gain their respectability through the study of such texts.

histories and practices at the shrine. The overriding Mandali narrative drowns out the voices of these less powerful agents, and their conflicting interpretations thus fail to gain traction at the site. Competing views found at Hinglaj relate to discourses among Hindu communities all over Pakistan (and in fact all over the world) and serve as a localized condensation of national and international discussions of what it actually means to be a (Pakistani) Hindu. Hinglaj's position as a central point of reference for discussions about Hindu identity in Pakistan (and beyond) increases the influence of the HSM—and the Lasi Lohana community—and how they understand ideals of "Hinduness."

For examining the various operational forms of solidification, I will, therefore, look in greater detail at the role of organizations—the HSM in particular—in "guiding" visitors at the shrine today, shaping what I will call an "ideal Hindu body." To portray its institutional logic, I will draw from Foucault's work on governmentality (Foucault 1982), showing how the HSM's accumulated institutional power allows the organization to connect its suggestions and recommendations to discourses of progress and education, thus elevating its particular religious understanding of the shrine into a universal Hindu behavioral norm. I will further argue that this ability to produce notions of "common sense" at the shrine is best understood through Gramsci's concept of hegemony (later adopted by Laclau and Mouffe [2001]), which will add evenly to the overall concept of solidification.

In a latter part, I will show how this process of solidification is not necessarily a one-way street in which the HSM dictates its truth-claims onto an inactive and nameless body of visitors. Rather, important truth-claims are the outcome of a struggle between different discourses coming together at Hinglaj. To emphasize this aspect of my theory of solidification I will use a historical analysis of the recent prohibition of animal sacrifice at Hinglaj. This will make clear how a sequence of contingent events led to this ban, which was only retroactively interpreted by the HSM—as well as by many devotees in the valley—as a significant aspect of a "proper Hindu practice." This example will also give a close description of the resistance against the HSM and show how the ban became a politicized issue, which fissured and unified the community simultaneously.

6.2 Post-foundational Anthropology: Having Opinion, Denying Opinion

Let me recall a few methodological points from my introduction. Fieldwork at the shrine in Balochistan was frequently characterized by a cacophony of different truth-claims—both from inside and outside the Hindu communities—trying to establish meaning out of the recent changes at Hinglaj. As one

author on Hindu traditions in Pakistan put this process aptly: "I write so that the people can see what the *actual thing* [about Hinglaj] is" (italics added).[2] My suggestion for tackling this predicament is to critically engage with writings on the ontological turn and the field of post-foundationalism. While the ontological turn emphasizes that such truth-claims need to be taken seriously in their ability to "create" truth at the shrine, post-foundationalism foregrounds their necessary relationship to dynamics of exclusion. This has, as we have seen, significant consequences. Such an approach does not only postulate the absence of a homogeneous Hindu tradition at Hinglaj, but reveals the ways in which actors are actively engaged in producing precisely such a homogeneity. To augment this approach, I suggested in Chapter 1 the work of Laclau and Mouffe, whose theoretical concept of the nodal point is apt for analyzing the distribution of several truth-claims within a certain field. Let me recall their main points briefly.

Nodal points unite a group of people and supply it with coherency and meaning. The "equivalential" (Laclau and Mouffe 2001) relationship emerging between these people stems from a common opposition to an outside, which is antagonized by all members. In other words, group unity will be defined through its constitutive outside. A good example to describe this logic can be taken from the history of Pakistan itself. When the Pakistani government appointed a commission in 1953 to investigate the reasons behind the anti-Ahmedi riots, a group of Muslim legal scholars was formed to define once and for all who should be considered a true Muslim. After days of debate, their lack of consensus caused them to declare:

> Keeping in view the several definitions given by the *ulema* (sic), need we make any comment except that no two learned divines are agreed on this fundamental. If we attempt our own definition [of the Muslim] as each Divine has done and that definition differs from that given by all others, we unanimously go out of the fold of Islam. And if we adopt the definition given by any one of the *ulema* (sic), we remain Muslims according to that *alim* [Muslim religious scholar] but *kafirs* (apostates) according to the definition of everyone else." (Cited in Shaikh 2009, 61; italics, brackets, and *sic erat scriptum* in the original)

This famous episode in the history of Pakistan shows how it is always possible to add one more meaning to a universal term so as to extend the chain of

2. "*Ham kitāb likh'te haiṃ tāki log dekh sak'te haiṃ actual cīz kyā hai.*"

positive characteristics describing any kind of group. Only through the negative definition—through the definition of what the group is not—the chain of characteristics is closed. In this way, Farzana Shaikh also concludes that the anti-Ahmedi sentiment in Pakistan was also a means to bring a feeling of unity to the various Muslim schools in the formative period of the Islamic Republic (Shaikh 2009).

A nodal point represents, often temporarily, a group of heterogeneous members through their common denial of something "fake." The same is true for truth-claims about Hinglaj, as they supply a group with coherence and closure through a commonly shared denial. Owing to the heightened interest and investment into the site from the side of the Pakistani-Hindu community (and beyond), such considerations have become increasingly relevant for understanding the dynamics of group formations at the shrine. This analysis is particularly useful after a tradition's dislocation or, in other words, when a group is in upheaval. Then, the contingent foundations of truth-claims are still visible, and their exclusionary logic is conspicuous.

6.3 Hinglaj as (Rare) Hindu Public Space in Pakistan

Today, many Pakistani Hindus share the opinion that Hinglaj occupies an outstanding position among the country's religious sites. This is frequently explained by Hinglaj's ancient heritage (which Hindus and non-Hindus alike place within the same time frame as that of the Mohenjo-Daro civilization) and its mention in Sanskrit scriptures (cf. Motyani 2011, Ansari 2001). For many, these two labels—its age and its ties to Sanskrit—distinguish the place from other Hindu sites in Pakistan and endow it with the aura of a "real" *tīrtha sthān*. In fact, for most people, the shrine is considered the oldest in the entire Hindu tradition, so ancient and important that Hindus even come from India to visit it.

This interest by Indian visitors represents a particular source of pride for Pakistani devotees of Hinglaj. Because many are accustomed to looking to India in terms of religious authority, this valorization of the shrine is refreshing for the community, and many visitors refer to this appeal. These visits from abroad demonstrate to Pakistani Hindus that their counterparts from India have reason to consider a difficult journey to Pakistan necessary for their spiritual development or simply for the fulfillment of worldly boons. Hindu religious authority is largely inaccessible in Pakistan for reasons including a lack of translations of Hindu religious texts into Urdu (*nastaʿlīq*), Punjabi (also *śāh mukhī*), and Sindhi (*nasx*) as well as the government's reluctance to offer religious education for

Hindus in many schools. For this reason, Pakistani Hindus often feel deprived of religious literature and so, understandably, religious know-how from India is held in high esteem. Indian groups at the shrine are frequently treated with respect and curiosity and get regular attention from local and national television channels broadcasting all over the country. This influx of pilgrims from India raises awareness about the shrine in a wider Pakistani media landscape, increases its appeal to Pakistani Hindus and, at the same time, introduces various religious practices from all over India at the shrine.

As mentioned above, several factors have contributed to the Hinglaj *melā's* rise in significance to become one of the biggest—for many even the biggest—festival for Hindu communities in Pakistan, and as this has happened, pilgrims' increasing contributions to the valley have significantly altered the religious landscape there. Besides factors that have already been mentioned, the location of the shrine in a remote desert region, outside urban settlements, is certainly a significant reason for the temple's increasing public visibility. This undoubtedly is related to the small number of public spaces available for Hindus in Pakistan. The remote location of Hinglaj helps the community to celebrate in an undisturbed environment, unlike public Hindu celebrations elsewhere which can sometimes lead to resentment, or even violence.

Recent developments at the shrine also pluralized the range of Hindu communities suddenly interested in it. With the number of visitors increasing, the spectrum of religious paraphernalia seen in the valley has also expanded, reflecting the desire of many communities to contribute to the shaping of meaning in the valley. Such contributions vary widely. Some pilgrims, for example, carry long poles bearing ochre-colored flags or large prints of the Goddess along with the name of the donor and his or her place of origin. Some years ago, Gujarati Hindus from Karachi began constructing a small booth for Melari (Meladi) Mata in the heart of the valley.[3] By 2013, that booth had become a small concrete temple, tiled in a manner similar to Hinglaj and housing a statue of the Goddess about one and a half meters tall. Around the beginning of the millennium, another group of visitors had a vision of Momai Mata[4] a short distance up the mountains on the way to Chaurasi, where they later constructed a wooden edifice that has been expanded over the years. By way of such actions, the religious landscape inside the valley is constantly growing and changing, and almost every year, pilgrims make additions or revisions to the different temples, statues, and ritual places. Some of these, like the temple

3. On Melari, the dirty Goddess, see Pocock (1973, 62–64).

4. Momai Mata is worshipped by a few Gujarati Hindu communities in Karachi.

of Melari Mata, have financial backing from certain communities allowing them to become established religious sites, while others, more flimsy, ultimately vanish beneath the valley's rare but fierce rainfall.

Many developments around the shrine follow a certain rhythm. Weeks before the big *phālgun/caitra melā*, the HSM cleans the valley, repaints the temples, and does minor renovation work. A few days before the beginning of the festival, paths are newly marked, and small arrows are painted on the ground to guide people through the site. This "refurbishing" of the valley also contributes to new interpretations of existing temples and pilgrimage paths; the HSM even responds to suggestions and requests by previous visitors. In the course of these weeks prior to the festival, many Hindu organizations and politicians approach the HSM to reserve a spot in the valley where they can set up stalls and stages. Hindu welfare organizations usually build small information stalls, and sometimes local politicians even sponsor dance and singing programs to reach out to the population and publicize their candidacy.

In spite of its great importance and ability to draw the largest crowds, the *phālgun/caitra melā* is by no means the only religious holiday during which the shrine is widely frequented. During *baqra ʿīd*, for example, many visitors come from Karachi and interior Sindh to worship at the site. Due to the comparatively wide area over which the temples and holy springs are spread, it can be difficult to guess the number of devotees at the shrine at any given time, but the HSM roughly estimates the figure to be between six thousand and nine thousand visitors on this public holiday (although, because this estimate is not based on selling tickets, it can remain only a speculation). Other major Islamic holidays like *mīlād-al-nabī* (the birthday of Prophet Mohammad) and the day of *ʿāśūrah* (mourning of *muḥarram* and the commemoration of the fasting of Moses) also attract a significant number of visitors, mainly from urban areas like Karachi and Hyderabad.

Two of the most active Hindu organizations at these festivals in recent years are the Pakistan Hindu Seva Samaj (PHSS) and the Pakistan Hindu Seva Trust (PHS). While the PHSS was established quite recently, in 2012, the PHS began its work in 2010.[5] The president of the PHS described the goals of the organization to me as follows:

> Our mission is to bring unity to the people. Every *community* [original in English] has the wish to unite and to be strong together. Another aim

5. Officially, however, the PHS was only registered in 2011. This highlights the fact that most of the Hindu welfare organizations now active in Pakistan have been established in the past

> is to help people [*sevā kar'nā*], wherever our help is necessary. We also try to bring *awareness* [original in English] so that our Hindu brothers understand what the real problems in our community are.[6]

To extend its network and influence, the PHS organizes a wide range of initiatives and uses the various *melās* at Hinglaj to make strategic contacts among Hindus in Karachi, Sindh, and, in fact, the whole country. Almost every year, the PHS collects donations to fund the travel expenses of Hindu widows who wish to go to Hinglaj. In 2012, the organization printed leaflets with prayers in Sindhi and Urdu "to help people" (*logoṇ kī madad kar'ne ke lie*) recite the correct prayers at the shrine. As they distributed these flyers, PHS volunteers simultaneously exchanged phone numbers and Facebook contacts with other devotees, a type of networking aimed at the distribution of information and to "bring unity among the Hindus," as one member said. Extensively employing social media for its purposes, the PHS collects these contacts to mobilize people throughout the year for certain community-based initiatives. In 2012, for example, the PHS organized a cleaning of the Hindu graveyard in Purana Golimar,[7] Karachi, which was announced via the Internet and text messages. The organization also uses its network to mobilize Hindus from all over the country to march to Mohammad Ali Jinnah's *mazār* (Urd. tomb, mausoleum) on August 14, Pakistan's independence day. These marches, which usually receive a small mention in the media, are staged annually to show the Hindu community's allegiance to the state of Pakistan. For organizing such events, the PHS's wide network of contacts allows it to assemble the necessary base of volunteers quickly.

The PHSS is a comparatively younger organization, established in response to the tragic death of a walking pilgrim who was hit by a motorbike (see Chapter 4). The incident raised questions about the adequacy of security and medical facilities inside the valley and ultimately led to the founding of the PHSS. Initially, the PHSS devoted itself mainly to collecting donations in Hindu neighborhoods in order to set up a medical

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few years, with the oldest being the Pakistan Hindu Council, founded in 2006. Certainly, there were always local Hindu *paṃcāyats* (Hin.), temple committees (like the HSM) and particular caste bodies representing the demands of their respective communities. However, the organizations explicitly working for the promotion of a general (national) Pakistani-Hindu community are a recent phenomenon.

6. From a personal conversation in 2012.

7. This is indeed a graveyard where Hindus are buried, and not a *smaśān* (Hin. cremation ground).

camp at Hinglaj, but it quickly expanded its mission as it gained support. Many members also help the HSM volunteers clean up the valley after the festivals. In 2013, just one year after its establishment, the PHSS had already begun organizing religious functions in the Narayanpur neighborhood and had started collecting money for the construction of an ashram in Karachi's Defence Colony. The PHSS promotes a spirit of caste-transgressing unity and tries to encourage this sense of belonging regardless of one's subcommunity with identification cards and yellow T-shirts sporting the organization's logo. Flyers distributed in Urdu at the Hinglaj *melā* describe the main goals of the organization in 2012:

- To help poor families and widows with their monthly expenses
- To assist impoverished youth to arrange their marriage
- To provide free medical treatment
- To establish medical camps at pilgrimages
- To supply poor children with education and scholarships
- To establish a society for the donation of blood
- To establish camps for flood-affected people

Both organizations—the PHS and the PHSS—appeal mainly to members of the Dalit communities; although the PHS is patronized by high-caste philanthropists, for the most part, its core message of Hindu unity and its community-based social work attracts young, low-class urban Hindu men who are accessible through social media. However, sometimes young Christians and even some Muslim men join the initiatives by these organizations. This is certainly in part a function of the proximity in which the different minority communities in Karachi live. Some of these community events organized by the PHS and PHSS may technically be religious in nature, but sometimes they are better understood as social events in which the youth of particular neighborhoods participate, thus thwarting common religious taxonomies. Muslim support is in particular often highlighted by the Hindu organizations in the media coverage of their events.

The festival at Hinglaj, with its thousands of (Hindu) visitors, is, for both organizations, a way to contact new people and to spread their ideas among Hindus from all over the country. The rise of these and other organizations in the valley has not, however, been completely harmonious. With their growing influence among increasing numbers of visitors, these organizations also bring new interpretations of tradition and practice that are sometimes inconsistent with the understandings propagated by the HSM. The proliferation of views and opinions about how the Goddess should be worshipped have

already been discussed through textual examples in Chapter 2. In what follows, I will seek to show how one such organization, the HSM, attempts to establish its own particular interpretation as "common sense" at the shrine. To do so, the HSM uses Hinglaj's influential position—a situation the HSM itself helped to create—to promulgate a fixed repertoire of practices and behaviors. Before I elaborate on this in more detail, however, I must first introduce the Dewani clan, currently responsible for many decisions made within the HSM. Its history will help to explain the authoritative power of the Mandali.

6.4 The Hinglaj Sheva Mandali and the Dewani Family

Hinglaj is the clan Goddess (Hin. *kul'devī*) of the Dewanis, a Sindhi Lohana family from Las Bela that has played an important role in organizing the event ever since the beginning of the institutionalized *yātrā*. Virsimal Dewani is currently the pilgrimage's chief organizer and the face of the HSM in the media. Dewani is also the one who frequently represented the HSM in my interviews and who seems to be the main decision maker (see Fig. 6.1).

Even though I talked to many volunteers and other members of the HSM, I was referred back to Dewani on numerous issues. The Dewani family, like many members of the Lohana community living in close proximity to Las Bela, finds its links to Hinglaj in numerous "rites of passage" (van Gennep

FIGURE **6.1** Virsimal Dewani giving an interview to the news channel Dawn in 2010

2005), like the *upanayana saṃskāra* or the *guru dakṣiṇā*, which are traditionally performed in and around Hinglaj (cf. Motyani 2011, 282; Khatri 1973, 24). This ritual relationship, according to Dewani, which dates back many generations, binds the family to the shrine and requires even members living abroad to return to Pakistan for certain ceremonies.

Ever since the inception of the HSM, Virsimal Dewani has been in charge of the organization and has thus played a central role in the Mandali. Even though the idea for an annual gathering at Hinglaj came from a Karachi devotee, Vasrup Chand Tusli, Virsimal Dewani was, from the beginning, significantly involved in the *melā*'s establishment. He is a skillful organizer who changed the role of the HSM from a mere travel operator in the 1980s to an active designer of the tradition. When asked about his family's work in the HSM, Dewani once simply said: "If we were not volunteering our time and effort, who else would do it?" This old and close connection to the Goddess Hinglaj is certainly one of the reasons the Dewanis and, by proxy, also the HSM are considered to have such authority in the interpretation of the shrine's history. Many devotees of the Goddess show a fair amount of respect to the family, sharing the belief that the Mandali possesses special knowledge about the place and its history. In interviews, pilgrims frequently referred me to the HSM, or directly to Virsimal Dewani, when it came to questions they could not answer. Dewani himself visited Hinglaj for the first time when he was a child, more than forty years ago, in 1971, and so was a great source of information about the pilgrimage's history. In fact, I could not find anyone else who had seen the place before 1971, and so most of my inquiries about the history of the valley during the twentieth century came, one way or another, back to Dewani's experience.

In my conversations with him and his family, I often mentioned different interpretations of the shrine's history that I had gathered from oral traditions in interior Sindh or India. These varying accounts often involved alternative interpretations of the *mūrti* or were related to particular holy ponds in the Hinglaj Valley. Many a time, the Dewanis contested these ideas, arguing that they were lacking in any proper background knowledge. However, sometimes they also agreed with me, mainly when I presented narratives from the Charan or the Khatri communities of Rajasthan. Often, Dewani disagreed with ideas that had to do with sacrifice or with Dalit concepts, or with their perspective on the Goddess.

Dewani's contact with international pilgrims and visitors to the shrine further reinforces his knowledgeable aura. He has ties to Bombay and Dubai where parts of his family reside, and he maintains connections with various travel agents in India and internationally who organize trips to the

Balochistan temple (see Chapter 4). Dewani's regular correspondence with various spiritual experts from India, in particular, raises his prestige in the eyes of many devotees. Thus, the family's history and long relationship with the Goddess adds to the HSM's overall authority and is one reason for its extensive influence.

Besides such historical ties, the Dewani family's Lohana background certainly helps their influential positions. As has already been shown in Chapter 2, the Lohanas subsume a huge variety of castes and communities under their name and certainly represent a more affluent community within Pakistan's broader Hindu landscapes. It is important to note that, according to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Sindh, the biggest bulk of Pakistani Hindus, over 90 percent, consist of so-called scheduled caste communities. Hence, even though it is difficult to ascribe the Lohanas with hard and fast characteristics, the Dewani family's influential position is, to a certain extent, also linked to their upper-class (caste) background.

6.5 *Education, Progress, and Denial*

"We cannot distinguish between those moments when we have might and those when we are right."

(LATOUR 1993, 183)

Given its broad sphere of influence, the HSM exerts some level of control over every visitor's range of actions at the shrine; it exercises its power through the regulation of areas like information, ritual practice, and mobility. The Mandali's institutional power, gained in large part through its upper-caste members and connection to a family with long-standing ties to the Goddess Hinglaj, has enabled the temple organization to perpetuate a particular interpretation of ritual practices and narratives in and around Hinglaj over the past few decades. In this process, the HSM—a body consisting mainly of (Lasi) Lohana caste members—propagates its own interpretation of the Hinglaj tradition and simultaneously denies those of many others. In this process, they create a hierarchical discourse of "educated," and thus "proper," behavior (that which comfortably coincides with the Lasi Lohana tradition) versus "uneducated," and thus "improper," behavior inside the valley. "Educated" practices are promoted by the HSM through a set of rules and regulations that have been gradually implemented in the valley over the last few years. The visibility and solidification of these rules are gained through their constant repetition during the festive occasions. As mentioned above, I count four main festivals at the shrine: both *ʿīds, muḥarram*, and the main *phālgun/caitra melā*. Festivals

like Holi or Diwali do not play any significant role since they are not public holidays in Pakistan. While I will argue below that the selection of practices that are ultimately denied or supported by the temple organization is essentially contingent, the Mandali conspicuously opposes many rituals and performances that are generally linked with the "superstitious" practices of Pakistan's lower castes and tribes (Hin. *jāti*; Urd. *qaum*). In this way, the HSM acts in accordance with reformist Hindu movements and their historical rejection of folk traditions (Fuller 1992, 99–103).

This framing—an emphasis on education and progress rather than open opposition or resentment toward the traditions of lower castes—corresponds with those ideologies of Sindhi (Hindu) nationalism that attempt to transcend religious and caste taxonomies. Thakur, a historian of Sindh, also supports this view when he writes in his book *Sindhi Culture* (1951) that the "[c]aste system is almost absent in Sind" (Thakur 1997, 25). This perception might have to do with the assimilative role of the Sindhi Lohana *jāti*, which historically transgressed caste boundaries, absorbing a large bulk of various caste classifications under its name (Thakur 1951, 25). Sindhi nationalistic discourses, which portray Sindh as a place of religious harmony and tolerance, have also played a role. To devoted Sindhi Hindu nationalists, acts of caste discrimination are anathema, and in many of my conversations with them, such individuals told me that it exists today only in India or other provinces of Pakistan. Many upper-caste Sindhi Hindus often deny or ignore acts of segregation among Hindu communities in Pakistan. This behavior is fiercely opposed by Dalit organizations that strongly criticize the upper castes, especially the Hindu landowning class, and their involvement in the oppression of the lower *jātis*.[8] Some people even went so far as to blame the difficulties for Hindu communities in Pakistan solely on the upper-caste Hindus, who keep a tight grasp on their position of power.[9] The lamentations of discrimination put forth by the lower classes (or castes) directly conflict with perceptions among the elevated classes (predominantly merchant castes) who seem ignorant of or unwilling to accept or mention any such discrimination within the Hindu

8. In a survey I conducted in 2012 among visitors at Hinglaj with the help of my assistant during the *phālgun/caitra melā*, 26 percent stated that they felt discriminated against or treated badly due to their caste background (Question in Urdu: "*zād kī vajah se tacṣṣub yā nafrat kā sāmnā karnā paṛtā*?").

9. This notion also expands into the NGO sector, where Hindu welfare organizations run by wealthy Sindhi businessmen are mocked and their actions are often portrayed as mere self-interest. The Pakistani Hindu Council is a frequent target of such accusations. The following is a complaint by the Dalit organization, the Hindu Sabha, on their Facebook page: "Pakistan Hindus Council is not the representative organization of Pakistani Hindus. It is 'Family

community. A separate study is needed to give this important and difficult topic its due. Relevant to the topic here, however, is that many efforts by upper-caste Hindus to "educate" or to bring "development" to the lower castes are mocked as hypocrisy by Dalit organizations.

In maintaining the concept of "educated" versus "uneducated" practices at the shrine—usually correlating to upper- and lower-caste behavior, respectively—the Mandali perceives itself as a guardian of truth and in the role of an educator seeking to rid the Goddess's tradition of antiquated and premodern conceptions. Through its interventions in supporting or denying certain practices during the Hinglaj festivals, the HSM perpetuates its own understanding of progress and education, which stands in sharp contrast to low-caste rituals in Sindh such as the sacrifice of animals or the consumption of alcohol as *prasād* (Hin. remnants of food offered to an idol).

This "modern/educated/proper" and "primitive/uneducated/improper" divide is not only found at the shrine of Hinglaj but is also present in Urdu publications about Hindu communities in Pakistan more generally (cf. Jethamalani 1994; Jajot 2011; Rathi 2010). The foreword of Jethamalani's book in Urdu reads:

> I hope that my Hindu brothers—especially the educated youth—are saved from the crooked tantric knowledge and [I hope that they] accept the Shastrik form of worship with devotion and faith. With the Goddess' grace they will be able to gain more and more from this book.

Clearly, the HSM is not the sole driver of this brand of progress and change. In fact, there are many such "progress"-oriented revitalizing movements among Hindus in Pakistan today. Within the past decade, especially, the community has found a new confidence and voice as a minority in Pakistan. Nevertheless, due to its influential position as organizer and administrator of what is generally considered the largest active *tīrtha sthān* in Pakistan, it is among the most potent agents in perpetuating these ideas. In a 2012 interview, Dewani

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Council of Business Class Hindus of Karachi' . . . . Pakistani Hindus (with 3 million in 1998 and now around 5.5 million) are the biggest religious minority of Pakistan. 92 percent of them are so-called lower caste Hindus (officially declared as Scheduled Castes by Pakistan Government, which means untouchables). Out of such huge populations of these lower caste communities, Pakistan Hindu Council has not a single member from these communities. The so-called upper caste Hindus are only 8 percent of the total Hindu population of Pakistan. But despite that they get all benefits from governments in the name of Hindus, as they are billionair and have relationships in government . . . . It better if they can rename it as Karachi Business Class Hindu Council (KBCHC)" [*sic*].

explained the role of the HSM and its impact on religious conceptions in his understanding. At one point, he said:

> Educated people have the responsibility to pass on knowledge, but not by prohibiting anything! People keep on doing these things anyway. It takes time. We only tell them: "If you do this or that then your wishes will be accomplished [by the Mother]." The goal is the same whether you sit in an A/C coach, a car, or a off-road vehicle. Also in a train there are three different classes; the only difference is the fee. But the train arrives. All arrive, but it is a difference of the class one is traveling in.

With these words, Dewani's approach to "proper" and "improper" behavior at the shrine becomes visible. He understands the temple organization as a part of a progressive movement that attempts to rid the Hindu community (Urd. *barādarī*) of its backward ideas and practices. He does not, therefore, simply oppose certain practices performed at Hinglaj by marking them "wrong;" instead, he organizes them according to their supposed efficacy. For him, all practices are oriented toward the same goal, but Dewani clearly distinguishes between the methods that the HSM promotes and other activities at the shrine. While an open rejection would only kindle opposition from the lower castes, the HSM bills its understanding of proper practice as consistent with common sense. Dewani's words do not baldly exclude other practices; rather, they deny their efficacy.

An example of the HSM's denial of certain ritual behaviors—in contrast to its promotion of those that are conspicuously well aligned with the Lasi Lohana community's tradition—concerns a *paṛāv* (Hin. halting/resting place) outside the valley. A few years ago, a conflict relating to this area arose between the HSM and another group of pilgrims who had interpreted this site, located only at a short distance from the entrance, as devoted to the God Hanuman. The Lasi Lohana community maintained that it was instead a place dedicated to Ganesha. To avoid future "misunderstandings," the HSM at one point simply installed a Ganesha statue in an attempt to put an end to the Hanuman worship there. I quote from a talk with another HSM leader in 2012:

> Some time before people thought that Hanuman ought to be worshipped on what was actually [*asal meṃ*] a Ganesha place [*sthān*]. At one point they even put a small Hanuman statue there! People are uninformed. You still meet some of them there who say that this is Hanuman. But we do not stand there 24 hours a day to tell them how it is. At one point, however, we put a Ganesh statue there and then people understood that it is Ganesha and not Hanuman.

FIGURE 6.2 The inside of the constructed Ganesha temple, 2010

With this blunt installation of its own interpretation of the *paṛāv*—corresponding naturally to its primary membership's own tradition—the HSM denied other voices the power to advance their own truth-claims of this place. The organization erected a sedentary Ganesha statue and ultimately even constructed a temple on top of it to resolve the question once and for all (see Fig. 6.2). Although there are still people who worship Hanuman there, this (spatial) solidification of the Ganesha worship effectively limited this practice. This example makes clear how the solidification of one particular tradition always entails a form of exclusion, but one that is represented by the HSM as a necessary correction of an "uninformed" interpretation.

6.6 Information, Rules, and Practices: The Work of the HSM

Several weeks before the April celebration, the HSM publicizes the exact dates and details of the festival on bulletins that are posted in Hindu temples in various Pakistani cities. In recent years, the *melā* has officially begun with the visit to Chandrakup on the first day and ended with a collective *havan* (Hin. ceremony), in front of the Hinglaj temple on the third day (see Fig. 6.3). On these announcement sheets, the Mandali also includes a certain set of

FIGURE 6.3 The *havan* ceremony during the April festival in Hinglaj, 2012

guidelines that (according to them) ought to be followed inside the valley. Aside from the strict banning of alcohol—a rule that emerged around the beginning of the millennium when the crowds started to swell—the guidelines mainly address organizational issues. Among these are the parking of cars, the setting up of stalls for commercial purposes, and the mandatory display of identification cards during the festival.

Over time, as conditions at the shrine have evolved, so too have the means by which the HSM steers visitors into compliance with its suggestions. At the beginning of the institutionalized *melā* in the 1980s, instructions regarding behavior during the festival came in the form of personal contact between HSM representatives and pilgrims. Later, as the number of visitors began to surge, the HSM started using loudspeakers to deliver public announcements to the crowds. For example, in 2012, I witnessed the *havan* ceremony, during which the crowds started to rush toward the fire and many people were pushed to the ground. Some volunteer workers took megaphones and appealed to the sanctity of the place and the wrath of the Goddess to calm the mob.

Today there is a sizable corps of HSM volunteers (Hin. *sevā kar'nevāle*) whose role it is to ensure a smooth course of events in the valley during festivals. Basically, anybody can volunteer to help the organization during the

festival. However, there is a cadre of "professional" volunteers who have worked with the HSM for many years. In interviews, these volunteers always emphasize that they are not employed by the HSM, but during my fieldwork between 2009 and 2015, I noticed that they regularly received "money donations" from the organization for their work.

These volunteers have the authority to exclude visitors who misbehave, but normally their job consists mainly of pointing out minor transgressions. According to some workers, these ideals eventually spread by word of mouth through the crowd until the pilgrims themselves begin to identify infractions by fellow visitors. These volunteers are also the pilgrims' primary source of information on sleeping options, water supplies, or food. But they also inform visitors about the necessary ritual proceedings in the valley. While many low-caste communities "volunteer" as masons, plumbers, or guards for the HSM, those volunteers posted in front of the Hinglaj temple, advising visitors on how they should perform their offering, are always Lohana. Prescriptions for pilgrim behavior inside the Hinglaj temple therefore remain firmly under the control of the Lasi Lohana community.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the HSM does not stop at verbal guidance in delivering these prescriptions to visitors. In 2011, the organization decided to post signs in Urdu and English stating the "do's" and "don'ts" inside the gates of the valley's enclosed area (see Fig. 6.4). These boards are positioned in close proximity to the entrance and encourage a certain conduct by visitors at Hinglaj. With these signs, the HSM is able to remind visitors, even without the help of volunteers, of the sacred character of the valley and of the fact that there is a (single) appropriate way of acting and worshipping in this area throughout the year. Thus, the organization's ideals are disseminated to visitors constantly during the year, establishing a general framework for guest behavior rather than being distributed only a few days annually (depending, of course, on how well those ideals are spread through the networks of visitors and volunteers).

It is precisely this open display of a set of rules that marks a crucial step in the solidification of religious practices and narratives at the shrine. These signs visibly delineate the area as religious space rather than merely scenic. Kim Knott, whose work addresses the production of religious space, writes:

> Sacred space is not the stimulus for ritual; ritual, as sacred-making behaviour, brings about "sacred" space. Ritual *takes place*, and makes place in this sense. (Knott 2005, 43)

Since particular practices make space sacred, these signs help to ensure certain performances, thereby maintaining Hinglaj as a sacred place throughout

FIGURE 6.4 The entrance to the valley with the signboard written in English, 2013

the year. While prior to 2011 official rules of conduct were only presented during a few days of festive activity, and then only by oral communication, nowadays, these boards provide a clear and highly visible articulation of regulative norms that reflect the ideals of the HSM. Aside from the temporal expansion of the rules of conduct, the step from oral circulation to a written declaration should not be underestimated. While orally transported content can be changed easily or might simply be ignored, the bold, black-on-yellow letters at the entrance (in two different languages) give an impression of steadiness, stability, and normativity. If the study of groups is the study of traces left by actors in attempting to define what their group is about (Latour 2005, 30–34), then along with publications about the shrine, these signs represent important steps in solidifying religious practices. Just as books stabilize history by limiting the range of ways in which its signifiers may be interpreted, these boards stabilize practice, limiting the possible range of action by visitors.

As mentioned above, these rules appear in Urdu and English on two separate boards. Since the Urdu version does not deviate from the English, I only quote the English sign here:

- All pilgrims are requested to take full care of the sanctity of Mata Mandir.
- When witnissing [*sic*] Mata take care of other pilgrims who have come to pay their respects to Mata.

- Please abstain from creating a nuisance in the premises of Mata Mandir.
- Drinking alcohol is prohibited in the premises of Mata Mandir offenders shall be handed over to the police.
- Eating of any kind of meat and fish are [*sic*] prohibited in the premises of Mata Mandir.
- Mata Mandir is open only for the purpose of paying homage to Mata.
- Don't come here for picnicking as Mata Hinghlaj [*sic*] Mandir is a sacred pilgrimage place which is only meant for prayer and paying homage to Mata Hinghlaj [*sic*].
- Please don't litter, take special care to keep this place clean.
- Please cover your head when entering Mata Mandir.

Besides this posted set of nine directives, the HSM also propagates two additional rules not mentioned on the board that are enforced by volunteers and the Balochistan police during the gathering days: the ban on animal sacrifices at the shrine of Kali Mata, which will be discussed at length below,[10] and the official prohibition on Muslims entering the valley during the April festival.

The HSM's ban of non-vegetarian food (rule number five) is paradigmatic of the organization's work. Dewani once mentioned that although he and his family do regularly eat meat at home, "meat should not be consumed at a *tīrtha*," and he added that he had seen other sacred places, like Haridwar (Uttarkhand, India) or Vrindavan (Uttar Pradesh, India), where non-vegetarian food was also strictly forbidden. The HSM leader had traveled repeatedly to India and visited major religious sites there, so the idea of imposing vegetarianism on a large scale at Hinglaj was legitimized by what he had seen at other sacred Hindu places.

The practice of *ahiṃsā* (Hin.), in its general understanding as a lifestyle promoting non-violence, particularly in the form of a vegetarian diet, is cited by many sources as a long-standing practice on the pilgrimage, although this is difficult to prove (cf. Abadhut 1964, Shastri 1977, Lakhavat 2011). Today, the Goddess Hinglaj is generally understood as a vegetarian deity who only accepts non-animal offerings from her worshippers. Some colonial sources, however, also show that until recently, it was customary for many people to

10. To the question about why the ban on animal sacrifice is not mentioned on the signs, Dewani answered: "To this day whenever people make a vow [*mannat*], then they sacrifice goats—so that is why it is not written on the sign. I will not stop them. I will only advise them to do such and such. I will not forbid them to do that."

eat the sacrificed animals at the Kali shrine located just some meters before the temple of Hinglaj (Goldsmid 1863, 207). Some Sindhi Hindu authors, however, claim this to be a tradition alien to Hinglaj, brought to the shrine by foreigners (Khatri 1973, 10). After 2001, when the shrine rose in importance as a unifying signifier for the entire Pakistani-Hindu community, the critical role of vegetarianism became increasingly emphasized at Hinglaj by the HSM. Today, the organization links a vegetarian diet to "proper" Hindu behavior by denying the consumption of meat as a legitimate practice inside the valley.

With this focus on vegetarianism, the Mandali not only directs how people should act inside Hinglaj but also actually creates an ideal of a literal body that consumes according to the organization's understanding of "proper" practice. With the help of the free community kitchen (Urd. *bhaṇḍārā*), the HSM exerts direct influence on food consumption and therefore, according to widespread Hindu theories on the relationship between diet and the constitution of the human mind/body, on the amount of *tamas* (Hin.) present in pilgrims during the festival.[11] Knott describes this relationship between religious sites and the transformation of the body in a nutshell:

> The body, furthermore, may be transformed according to the conventions and requirements of the religious community, either in terms of dress (e.g. by donning a cross, turban, *hijab*, or sandalwood neck-beads), in conformity with a religious regime (e.g. Islamic *salat*, or prayer, Hindu *puja* or worship), or at times of fasting and feasting. (Knott 2005, 60f.)

In a 2010 interview, when discussing this vegetarian diet, Dewani once again highlighted the HSM's style of guiding visitors inside the valley: "We do not forbid people to eat [meat] there, or tell them what to do; we only advise that this is a *tīrtha sthān* and here meat should not be consumed."[12]

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11. *Sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* are three qualities originally found in the *saṃkhya* school of thought. *Tamas* is of the lowest quality of these three and is said to be supported by, among other things, a non-vegetarian diet.

12. In a survey I conducted during the 2012 *phālgun/caitra melā*, I handed out questionnaires to one hundred people, from which I received eighty-nine back. All of the devotees I talked to claimed that they follow the rule of keeping a vegetarian diet in the valley, even though more than two-thirds indicated they consumed meat at home. Many added that the light vegetarian meals are more appropriate for a holy site like Hinglaj, thus replicating ideas put forward by the HSM. Similar to the question of animal sacrifice, vegetarianism is idealized by the HSM in the valley to the extent that it serves as an important signifier of what it means

Several other rules on the signs also convey a message about the desirability of certain moral behavior and bodily practice in the valley. Some aim to indicate to the visitor that he or she is now at a sacred site (rules six and seven) and specifically at a site where people should behave like Hindus (rules seven and five). In regard to this crucial separation among visitors about sacred and profane attitudes in Hinglaj, it comes as no surprise that the HSM dedicates two points on the signs to this issue. The notion of coming to the valley merely for entertainment purposes is a contentious topic, and the organization never tires of pointing out that Hindu and non-Hindu visitors should respect the sanctity of Hinglaj and ought to behave in an appropriate way. The forbidding of picnicking is an attempt by the HSM to claim the valley as sacred space even beyond the festive days. The organization thereby emphasizes the area's spiritual character in comparison to its mere scenic attributes. In these points (rules six and seven), we see again the drawing of a distinction between the "tourist" and the "pilgrim" (see Chapter 4).

The last rule on the board, explicitly asking visitors to dress in a particular way by wearing a head covering when entering the temple, is of particular interest. The practice of covering one's head before entering a sacred area might be influenced by practices of the Nanak *paṃth*. Many upper-caste Hindus in Sindh, especially from the Lohana community, refer to Nanak and his teachings (Thakur 1951, 141), and it is common to cover one's head before walking into a *tikānā* (Sin.), the temple containing the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book of Sikhism. This rule thus provides one of the most conspicuous marks left by the Lohana tradition upon Hinglaj and simultaneously is the one least followed during the festival.

The organization's institutional authority allows it to largely control the distribution of information at the temple, making their interpretation of the shrine "easily readable" (Latour 1983, 161). The means of dissemination by which the Mandali does so are what Latour calls "inscription devices" (Latour 1983, 161). Controlling such inscription devices at Hinglaj implies, as I have shown, the ability to influence the work of volunteers who are in constant contact with the visitors, to erect signs bearing guidelines, or to construct temples.

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to be a "proper" Hindu. I must also put my own qualitative findings in perspective, however, since a closer look at the pattern of responses reveals that almost all of the people I talked to personally, who either were not able to read and write or answered my questions in the course of a regular conversation, answered affirmatively to the question of whether they ate meat at home. In the questionnaires I had handed out and for which I was not personally present when they were filled in, the respondents always stated they were vegetarians.

As is clear from the existence of this broad set of inscription devices in the valley, through its exceptional role as a unifying religious space for many different Hindu sects, castes, and ethnicities, Hinglaj is not simply a particular, unique locality anymore; it stands in a synecdochical relationship to Hinduism as such. The HSM defines Hinduism to the visitors at the shrine through the usage of these inscription devices, answering the question of what an "ideal" Hindu is by foregrounding certain truths and necessarily denying others. In the following, I will revisit the "style" in which the HSM operates, arguing that new insights into the mechanism through which the organization has gained this position can be obtained through the works of Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci.

6.7 Governing Hinglaj

The rules of conduct prescribed by the HSM might be understood as mere suggestions, but with the Mandali's frequent references to their educational purpose, such suggestions form part of a wider discourse of development through which the organization executes subtle control over the actions and performances of visitors at Hinglaj. As the remarks by Dewani and other HSM workers have shown, the HSM does consider its regulations to be suggestions that cannot be strictly imposed. As one speaker put it: "No one [of the HSM] sits there with a gun."[13] As is clear from the foregoing section, however, the HSM's actions, such as the posting of signs, do have a certain agenda: they are designed to gradually bring about a change in behavior among the valley's visitors. Furthermore, these mechanisms of control aim to create a certain subject: an "ideal" Hindu. This style of guiding the visitors toward a preconceived ideal—often associated with the notion of education and progress—illustrates Foucault's work on power and "governmentality" in his later writings. There, the concept of governmentality is used in two different ways: the first is an approach for analyzing the logics of power, and the second is used to present historic developments in particular western societies (Füller and Marquardt 2009). I am using the term here in the former sense: as an approach to power that analyzes the structures, practices, and institutions designed to influence people's behaviors. At one point, Foucault writes:

> In effect, what defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead,

13. "*Vahāṁ to koī baṃdūq rakh kar koī nahīṃ baiṭā hai.*" From a 2012 conversation.

> it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future. (Foucault 1982, 789)

In other words, governmentality is "an art of doing politics . . . which concerns the 'how' and the 'what' of public interventions" (Howarth 2010, 321).

The HSM does not directly impose its notions of "proper" behavior onto visitors since doing so would only trigger (more) resistance by many. Instead, the organization connects its understanding of the shrine to wider notions of progress and education, theoretically permitting the subjects of these regulations to choose for themselves whether they accept this ideal or not. Foucault sees this "freedom of choice" as an important lens through which to understand power. In his view, power must perforce include an element of freedom, which distinguishes it from enforcement by violence. Seen in this way, power consists of actions through which certain agents structure the field of agency of others. Thus, the relationship between slave and master would not fall under this category because "[p]ower is exercised only over free subjects" (Foucault 1982, 790). In slavery, there is no element of freedom at play. For Foucault, power is the connection of different positions under the influence of "government." The verb "to govern" then includes "modes of action, more or less considered or calculated, which were destined to act upon the possibilities of action of other people" (Foucault 1982, 790). Such an implementation of power does not require violence since it depends instead upon institutionalization and rationalization.

The HSM's actions in the valley fall squarely beneath this banner of institutionalization and rationalization. Their demands, spread by institutional means or inscriptional devices, were formulated in order to change the behavior of people visiting the shrine. With the organization's appeal to education, it rationalizes these demands and propagates them as a universal truth. As an HSM leader told me in 2010:

> We make the people understand that they should not do this or that; from that it slowly starts to make a difference. Our work is to make them understand—but they will only understand with time.

These small interventions, where the HSM explains to the "ignorant" visitors what they should do and how, effectively structure the pilgrims' possible field of action in a variety of ways. Because the organization sees itself as a messenger of progress that supports "educated" ideas, its members can also rely on a

strong ideological backing from the Pakistani-Hindu intelligentsia and from several Hindu welfare organizations that validate these restrictions.

These ongoing acts of government at Hinglaj produce a position of power that might best be understood through the concept of *hegemony*. Already introduced in the work of Laclau and Mouffe, hegemony goes back to the work of Gramsci, who understood it as a way of power that uses both, coercion and persuasion (Simon 1991, 24). In the context of Hinglaj, hegemony produces unity through the organization of a multitude of truth-claims. Hence, hegemony is "a relation, not of domination by means of force, but of consent by means of political and ideological leadership" (Simon 1991, 24). Griggs and Howarth also utilize this concept in their work on populism and environmental politics. At one point, they write:

> In our framework, we shall define the achievement of hegemony as the production of "common sense" in a particular site or sphere of the social, or indeed in society as a whole. In Gramsci's terms, this involves the winning of "intellectual and moral leadership" in society, and not just the achievement of political power. (Griggs and Howarth, 2008, 130)

It is precisely this production of "common sense" through "moral leadership" and a combination of coercion and persuasion that characterizes the HSM's *modus operandi* at the shrine of Hinglaj. Their control of the spreading and repeating of certain truth-claims ultimately helps the HSM solidify a particular behavioral codex at the shrine, thereby perpetuating the particularities of the Lasi Lohana practices through annual repetition. It is important to note, however, that this codex is produced at Hinglaj as if it reflected a commonsensical and generally correct Hindu behavior. The tradition of the HSM—that is, of the Lasi Lohana—seeks to elevate itself to the level of the universal tradition rather than simply being one of many. It eliminates other claims to truth by labeling them "less useful," "fake," or "outdated."

"Hindu unity"—a concept implying the idea that there exists an "actual," "eternal," or "real" way of practicing at the shrine—is the central myth at Hinglaj. The lack of such unity, conspicuous through the multiplicity of communities and truth-claims in Hinduism generally, as well as at this particular site, is countered by the HSM's hegemonic interpretation of the tradition. Their acts of governance produce "common sense" by creating a coherent narrative and practice at the shrine. Consensus and homogenous behavior at the shrine are thus a "temporary result of a provisional hegemony" (Mouffe 2000, 104) brought about by the HSM. This power, however, is not a widely

sedimented autonomous agency but rather in constant dialogue with the landscape and the crowds at the shrine attempting to solidify a certain set of narratives and practices. While such an exchange will be discussed in my case study of animal sacrifice below, the following first introduces a few dissident voices that oppose the HSM's work.

6.8 Responses and Resistance Against the HSM

As it happens, many visitors to Hinglaj do contest the HSM's work and influence. There are many voices in the valley expressing disapproval of the festival's management and of the rules introduced by the HSM. As discussed previously, the entry fee of 250 rupees (in 2012) in particular provoked resentment and protest among visitors, ultimately prompting a response by the HSM to abolish the ticket system in 2013. As long as the HSM was organizing the transportation, the necessity of the fee was more explicable to pilgrims. Since 2001, however, as the valley's accessibility opened up for many different kinds of vehicles, visitors were increasingly inclined to make the trip on their own. This also widened the communication gap between the HSM and the *melā* attendees, many of whom would encounter members of the Mandali only as they checked for tickets, gave orders, or organized the crowds. With the imposition of the fee, the utilization of this money became less transparent, and many *yātrīs* became increasingly irritated by the expense. In 2012, the issue of money that had been earned (or not earned) by the HSM during the *melā* became a hot topic and each side—the organization and the visitors—felt increasingly misunderstood by the other. When asked about this issue in spring 2012, one pilgrim said:

> I do not understand this, man [*yār*] . . . . If I want to perform the rituals at my Mother's home then why should I pay any money for that? And these shelters they [the HSM] have built there are also only for making money. They act as if they would build an ashram, but they only do this to make money. I do not understand that, man. Those special guests who come in their [Toyota] Land Cruisers, they get nice rooms, those who come from far on their motorbikes, or those who even walk, they should get that kind of respect. Man, it should not be like this! All children are the same for the Mother. This system of paying for *darśan* has to be stopped immediately.

This anger is unsurprising given that many visitors attending the festival are peasants from Sindh who come along with their entire family, usually

consisting of eight to ten people. For them, it was impossible to afford the entrance costs for all of their family members, so many tried to gain access without paying the fee. As described earlier, the HSM countered this attempt at subversion by providing the *bhag'vā paṭṭī* for a fee, which paying pilgrims were required to wear visibly in order to gain access to the inner part of the valley. During that period, the HSM engaged many young men who worked shifts during the day and night checking these wristbands to ensure that no one without it snuck by. Frequently, it came to little skirmishes between the visitors and these volunteers, some of whom, feeling powerful with their official identification cards and uniforms, took their job a bit too seriously. It is in any case understandable that both sides began to get annoyed after standing under the hostile desert sun for hours on end. Whatever the reason for the tension, at the time, these unpleasant micro contacts were often the only direct interaction that visitors had with the HSM, thus leading to growing resentment towards the organization among the crowd during the *phālgun/caitra* festivals.

The Mandali, on the other hand, presented a host of justifications for the unpopular fee. First among them were the expenses for the *bhanḍārā* (Urd. the community kitchen) that feeds—according to the HSM—around forty thousand people on the main days of the April festival. This argument was greeted with skepticism from many observers who claimed the HSM receives significant sums in the form of donations to provide food during the *melā*. In 2012, for example, many pilgrims told me that Hindu politicians and the Minority Minster of Sindh donate food for the *bhanḍārā* annually, and so the HSM does not pay for the majority of the food provided by the community kitchen. The organization confirmed its receipt of donations but nonetheless verbally played down the amount of food actually donated.

Another reason for the entry fee, according to the Mandali, were the costs of organizing large amounts of water brought from the nearby Hingol River to the valley by tankers. Since the natural stream inside the valley does not carry enough water for the huge crowds that have frequented the festival in recent years, the vehicles organized by the HSM must constantly replenish the water supply to cover the need. A third reason for the high fee cited by the HSM was an increase in petrol prices; petrol is used for the generators that provide the festival with electricity.[14] During the 2012 *melā*, every

14. I personally would add that a certain amount of money has to be distributed among local agents and the police to ensure a smooth course of events during the *melā*. I obviously have no direct statement about this from the HSM, which in general keeps quiet about such issues, but I myself witnessed situations in which bribes had to be paid to the local police.

pilgrim had to pay an additional 100 rupees at a checkpoint when approaching Chandrakup, one of the main stops on the way to Hinglaj. This money, however, was to be paid to the police and not to the HSM. When I inquired about why this fee had to be given to the police, I was told that it must be paid for the pilgrims' protection. Yet the officer did not tell me who it was the pilgrims had to be protected from.

Faced with the backlash resulting from the introduction of the wristbands, the HSM found itself in an awkward situation. The 250-rupee fee was only imposed during the April celebrations and was not necessary at any other time of the year; during both *ʿīd* festivals and *muḥarram*, when many pilgrims come from Karachi and Hyderabad to Hinglaj, the organization did not charge any money for the running of the generator or the food. Yet many Hindus in Pakistan (especially from the scheduled castes) saw the imposition of an entry fee at any time of year as typical profit-orientated behavior by the HSM, which consists mainly of members of the Lohana caste. Considering that the Lohanas are traditionally merchants and business people, such accusations were usually baldly linked to stereotypes of caste identity and behavior. Given this state of affairs, the organization found itself caught in a predicament. On the one hand, it had a vital interest in attracting a large number of visitors every year in order to emphasize the importance of the shrine and to gain further financial support from the government. On the other hand, such high numbers of visitors, estimated mostly by the number of tickets sold, also led to much speculation about the use of such large amounts of money.[15] Sensitive to the skepticism, HSM members would react by regularly listing the many different costs that added up in organizing the festival. For a long time, the organization was not able to satisfy the people's demands for transparency regarding expenses. Even its decision to put an end to the ticketing system could not stop the rumors about the proceeds the HSM had received before 2013; to this day, people still wonder aloud how the organization is suddenly able to manage the supposedly vast expenses. When I inquired about how the HSM was able to deal with the deficit following the abolition of the ticket system, I received the answer that they now have donors supporting them. Nobody was willing to tell me who these donors were and how they are able to organize the necessary amount of money.

15. One particularly interesting incident occurred in 2010 when the organization claimed to have sold forty thousand tickets. These sales would have generated revenues totaling 10 million rupees, about 85,000 Euros (2012). Many visitors wondered where this money had gone and argued that petrol and water alone could never have cost such a huge sum of money.

Money is not the only issue for which the HSM has been criticized, other complaints lodged against the organization also relate to caste. One of them deals with the organization's allegedly shallow knowledge of the history and the rituals at Hinglaj and its surroundings, a direct challenge to the organization's hegemonic position and religious expertise at the shrine. And while many perceive the Mandali as a legitimate source of information, others are skeptical about this Lohana version of history at the shrine. This criticism is, again, framed in stereotypes about the caste's background and the non-*dharmik* (Hin. religious) education of a merchant caste such as the Lohanas. As one Sindhi Hindu (himself a member of the Bhanushali *jāti*, another merchant caste) put it: "They are mostly wretched business types; they are not educated."[16] This hackneyed notion of caste, where businessmen cannot be educated and are interested only in making money, forms a prevalent core of the criticisms against the HSM.[17]

To deepen this analysis, I will next look at the prohibition of animal sacrifice (Hin. *bali*; Urd. *qurbānī*) inside the valley. An examination of the history of the ban will show how contingent events were retroactively assigned with meaning, which ultimately led to the representation of animal sacrifice as "improper" Hindu behavior. The institutionalized denial of the practice, built, among others, on the notion of it being a "Muslim custom," became a prominent characteristic of Hinglaj, particularly during the festival of *baqra ʿīd*. By introducing this together with the resistance following the ban, I hope to further emphasize how the solidification of the Hinglaj tradition is not a top-down process but a form of struggle emerging from the clashes between different truth-claims.

6.9 The Ban on Animal Sacrifice at Hinglaj

Identity politics at Hinglaj are not only a matter of traditional, already sedimented groups negotiating their different standpoints but also the production of different factions to coalesce over newly interpreted truth-claims. The ban on animal sacrifice (Hin. *bali*; Urd. *qurbānī*) at Hinglaj provides a compelling case study demonstrating the struggle over certain practices inside

16. "*Log becāre businessmen type haiṃ sāre paṛhe likhe haiṃ nahīṃ.*"

17. But, unfortunately, such stereotypes are also perpetuated by the HSM itself, which once turned down the request of a local scholar who had approached the organization for financial support to publish his work about the Goddess. This refusal—justified by the lack of money—earned the HSM a fair amount of mockery and supported some peoples' notion of the HSM and the Lasi Lohana community as being greedy and shallow.

the valley. To exemplify this, I portray two distinct ideological positions within the Hindu community of Pakistan, each of which assigns a certain importance to the performance of *bali*. On the one side is the "enlightened" group represented by the HSM, which has an interest in propagating the shrine as a centrally important religious place for Pakistani Hindus. They attempt to solidify *bali* as "uneducated" and obsolete (following a path I already described above). On the other side are the opponents of the prohibition, often members of low-caste communities—here represented through the Devipujak-Vagris—who are bound to give *bali* to the Goddess on a regular basis to sustain the health of the members of their community (and, in fact, of all Hindus during the festival). In their affirmation or rejection, both parties introduce the same element, *bali*, as a primary symbol of what it means to be a "true" Hindu. In both cases, *bali* stands for a different reality of Hindu identity in Pakistan. Animal sacrifice, thus, is a clear case in point for how alleged natural practices at the shrine reveal dynamics of exclusion and contingent foundations at deeper scrutiny.

6.9.1 *Baqra ʿīd* at Hinglaj

In 2010, during *baqra ʿīd*, a Muslim holiday, I traveled to the Hinglaj Valley to attend the *melā*. Usually at this time of year one finds a more relaxed environment than during the spring gatherings when thousands of people frequent the valley and the extreme heat in Balochistan makes fieldwork a grueling task. Once there, I encountered a wide array of Hindus from different cities and villages of Pakistan, but it was obvious to me that the majority of visitors had come from urban areas like Karachi or Hyderabad. Interestingly, in response to the question of why so many people had gathered in Hinglaj/Nani during *baqra ʿīd*, a frequent answer was that people wanted to escape the open slaughter of animals in their towns, a custom with which Muslims celebrate Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his first-born son. This is also how the Pakistan Hindu Seva Trust, an organization that often organizes trips to Hinglaj, understands the role of this *ʿīd* festival at Hinglaj. Its president once told me that the avoidance of the slaughter in the cities was one of the main incentives for Hindus to come to the shrine at this time of the year.

These statements were surprising because during these days (and also in later years) I had also witnessed the sacrifice of a rooster at the Kali Mata temple. On this occasion, the rooster sacrifice was done with haste and under the protest of a female bystander, who told the group performing the ritual that they should not slaughter the animal there. Later, when I asked the group about the protest, one man just shrugged and said, "Well, they all have gone Hare

Krishna, they are the ISKCON people, they tell us not to kill it."[18] The pilgrims who called themselves Devipujak-Vagris[19] were from Karachi and told me that they had offered a goat to the Goddess only the night before. The Vagri community portrayed this sacrifice as their duty, explaining that every time a festival is organized at Hinglaj and the Mother is deterred from her sacrifice, she causes accidents and disease among the pilgrims, thereby taking her own sacrifice ("*mātā xud bali letī*"). To support their point, the Vagris described many incidents in which people had horrible accidents or fell sick during the *melā* in Hinglaj. Notwithstanding the fact, then, that there is an obvious difference in terms of the quantity of animals slaughtered in Karachi or inside the Hinglaj Valley during the *baqra ʿīd* festival, the non-sacrifice of animals was apparently not such a stable marker for Hindu identity as many visitors I spoke to had initially presented it.

The HSM officially banned animal sacrifice inside the valley in 2004, and most of the devotees and visitors I spoke with seemed fully supportive of the ban, each presenting his or her own explanation for it. For example:

> "Actually (*asal meṃ*) you should not give *bali*, it is only allowed when one needs offspring."
>
> "It is not written in any of our books that people should sacrifice goats, so this is why it is forbidden here."
>
> "Well, this is a nature reservoir, it is not allowed to kill animals here."
>
> "People are now aware [that they should not sacrifice animals], they see [what to do] in books and on the TV."
>
> "The ISKCON community says it is wrong, they read the *Bhagavad Gītā*, they know it, it is in there."

These quotes are just a few examples of the answers I had noted from my conversations with visitors during *ʿīd* over the past few years.[20] Most of the pilgrims with whom I spoke cited religious reasons for the ban of animal sacrifice in the valley. Many stated that *bali* is either not mentioned in any Hindu scripture or that the *Gītā* explicitly forbids it. Yet a few also assumed that the regulations of the Hingol National Park, in which the shrine is

18. "*Jo hare rāma meṃ gaye hue haiṃ, ye kṛṣṇāvāle, ye kah'te haiṃ ki ham is ko na kāṭeṃ.*"

19. The members of the Vagri community supplied me with the spelling of this name.

20. In a survey I conducted during the spring *melā* in 2012 with eighty-nine participants, 44 percent of the respondents stated that they sacrifice goats on particular occasions, and 56 percent stated that they do not follow this practice at all.

located, are the reason. In any case, most of the visitors seemed to welcome or even justify the ban perpetuated by the HSM—except for the Vagri community, which will be discussed at length below.

6.9.2 History of a Contingent Prohibition

In 2004 the HSM decided to ban this practice from the area. According to Dewani, the main spokesman of the HSM, this decision arose from a multitude of organizational issues and internal conflicts. In the initial days of the established annual *melā* in the mid-1980s and early 1990s, many visitors bought goats from the local Muslims living in tiny villages around the valley (Dodiya 1989, 52). This led to variability in price and quality of the sacrificial animals. Later, particularly in the mid-1990s, when the number of visitors was steadily increasing, the demand for goats expanded while the supply stayed low.[21] For this reason, many goats were sold for high prices but—according to the HSM—were actually not suitable for the sacrifice. This implies that some of them were either female, too young, or not healthy enough. In addition to this issue, visitors also began slaughtering the goats according to their availability rather than according to the traditional days and times propagated by the HSM (usually the eighth day of the pilgrimage). Reacting to this, the Mandali began taking the supply of sacrificial goats into its own hands, transporting suitable animals on trucks from the nearby city of Las Bela. Dewani explained that the goats were sold at one rate and on one day only so that the visitors had an incentive to carry out the *bali* on one particular day—the day designated by the HSM for the worship of the Goddess Kali. However, with the consistent swelling of the number of visitors, the Mandali was no longer able to keep up the supply of goats and eventually also had to stop the transport from Bela. Apart from these problems, time constraints also made the mass slaughter difficult. Dewani said that it was simply not possible to sacrifice more than forty goats a day in accordance with the traditions at the shrine.

It was not only organizational issues that led to the prohibition of *bali*, however. At the beginning of the new millennium, resistance against the sacrifice also came from another front: in those years, members of the Vishnu *paṃth*—in this case mostly the Maheshvari community and followers of the ISKCON—had repeatedly requested that the organization stop the slaughter of the goats. In those days, the path to Hinglaj temple was not yet extended and people had to climb over stones and through bushes to reach it. One of the

21. "*Lenevāle zyādā, denevāle kam the.*" From an interview with Dewani in 2012.

easier paths led directly past the Kali Mata temple, the main location for the *bali*. So many pilgrims had to pass by the bloody rituals to reach Hinglaj's *sanctum sanctorum*. Disgusted by the act, some appealed to the HSM to stop the activity. Reacting to the organizational difficulties and these voices of opposition to the practice, the Mandali finally decided in 2004 to ban animal sacrifice in the valley. However, for some time after the ban was enacted, members of the HSM secretly continued sacrificing goats in the mountains for the Goddess Kali. This was done in the name of all visitors to prevent misfortune, but eventually this slaughter was also brought to an end, I was told.

With the decision to stop the sacrifices, the HSM did not react only superficially to the demands of certain visitors but actually became the most active agency in the ban's enforcement through the establishment of a network of volunteers and ritual experts who help the Mandali to implement it. In this way, contingent—possible but not necessary—events led to the formation of a prohibition which then was retroactively interpreted by visitors and the organization as an "actual" element of the tradition. Around this time, the Dewani family (as well as others active in the HSM) also adapted to this change. While the Dewanis previously gave the blood of a goat to the Goddess Kali during the young men's *upanayana saṃskāra* (Skt.) ceremony—an initiation ritual for the community's male members in which a thread is given to symbolize maturity—now on such occasions, the family simply cuts the animal's ear and sets it free in front of Kali's temple.

The valley of Hinglaj is a point of convergence for a wide array of (Pakistani) Hindu concepts and truths and, as I argued before, also a location where "ideals of Hinduness" are performed. The place describes and prescribes narratives and religious practices that also gain influence outside the valley. With the continuous repetition of such guidelines during the annual *melās*,[22] practices thus propagated are gradually fixed and eventually become important nodal points in the Hinglaj discourse. Prohibition of animal sacrifice as one of the most visible forms of exclusion plays a crucial role. Through the rejection of *bali*, the community aims to define hard and fast guidelines not only for the annual gatherings at Hinglaj but also for the Pakistani-Hindu community in general. After the construction of the Makran Coastal Highway, Hinglaj attracted a large and diverse following with a variety of different ideas on how to practice faith at the shrine. Within this framework, the rejection of bloody

22. Besides the annual *phālgun/caitra melā* in April, which is the biggest festival of the year, people also gather in smaller numbers at *ʿīd ul fiṭr, baqra ʿīd*, and *muḥarram*. This is mainly due to the public holidays in Pakistan.

sacrifices conjures up a sense of "Hindu-unity" built on a perceived opposition to the Muslim sacrificial practice. Animal sacrifice, more than any other practice, kindles discussions about "proper" and "improper" Hindu behavior at the shrine. This effort to produce unity through not only the establishment but also the exclusion of certain truth-claims is a clear case in point for what I term a solidification of the Hinglaj tradition.

6.10 Discussions on the Legitimacy of Bali

Among some Hindu communities I worked with in Pakistan, blood sacrifice is associated with Islamic practice, or, more accurately, people are of the opinion that it *should be* associated with Islamic practice. *Bali* among Hindus in Pakistan is thus often portrayed as an act planted firmly outside "actual" Hindu behavior. Such discussions about the legitimacy of blood sacrifices are not uniquely connected to the shrine of Hinglaj and have been documented by many scholars before. In fact, disputes over the use or misuse of *bali*, or, more generally, the concept of *ahiṃsā* (Skt.), non-violence, may be as sedimented as the practice itself.

Ahiṃsā today plays a prominent role in discourses on India and Hindu religion in general. The concept became well known in the twentieth century through Gandhi's political struggle and the subsequent literature on India's fight for independence (Gupta 1992). The work of reform movements such as the Swami Narayana organization, established already during the lifetime of its founder (1781–1830), and later the ISKCON society, helped to securely link *ahiṃsā* and its corollary in vegetarianism to the conventional depiction of Hinduism and even to the Indian nation state itself. South Asian studies scholars also contributed to this notion of a natural link between non-violence and Indian religions. Deryck Lodrick, for example, writes in his book *Sacred Cows, Sacred Places*: "The doctrine of ahiṃsā, expressing Indian conceptions of the fundamental unity of all life, stands among the foremost virtues espoused by Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism" (Lodrick 1981, 55). This and similar statements exclude many Indian communities who practice *bali* or at least do not adhere to vegetarianism. The sentence further implies that Islam is excluded from the possibility of "expressing Indian conceptions." For this reason, the virtues defined here can be seen as the views of a particular elite. As discussed earlier, such approaches must be taken with a grain of salt as they disseminate a particular perspective in an attempt to paint a general picture of a whole society.

Classical texts show that the concept of *ahiṃsā* was already under debate in Sanskrit literature. Discussions about *bali* found at Hinglaj today are, in

some ways, a rearticulation of these earlier arguments. The following analysis of scholarly discourse on *ahiṃsā* shows that non-violence and connected issues like vegetarianism and animal sacrifice have for centuries been repeatedly discussed and have served as identity markers.

Indologists have produced a fairly large corpus of texts dealing with these issues. German scholar Ludwig Alsdorf (2010), for example, published a seminal piece on the practice of non-violence and vegetarianism in 1962. Even though some of his generalizing statements are rejected today,[23] his work provides an important analysis of the Sanskrit texts dealing with *ahiṃsā*. Alsdorf assumes that Vedic traditions did not know the concept of *ahiṃsā* and that the link between adhering to a certain diet and salvation was established only later in the *Manusmṛti* (200 BCE–200 CE). According to him, however, the connection at that point was still rudimentary and was not fully elaborated in the canonical version of the text. Alsdorf quotes a few examples of inconsistencies in this regard, particularly in chapter 5 of the *Manusmṛti* at 5, 48–49, which reads:

> You can never get meat without violence to creatures with the breath of life, and the killing of creatures with the breath of life does not get you into heaven; therefore *you should not eat meat*. Anyone who looks carefully at the source of meat, and at the tying up and slaughter of embodied creatures, should turn back from eating any meat. (Doniger and Smith 1991, 103f.; italics added)

Only a few lines later at 5, 56, however, the *Manusmṛti* explains:

> *There is nothing wrong in eating meat*, nor in drinking wine, nor in sexual union, for this is how living beings engage in life, but disengagement yields great fruit. (Doniger and Smith 1991, 104f.; italics added)

Such incompatibilities lead Alsdorf to conclude that this chapter of the *Manusmṛti* unites different historical stages and has collected different (scholarly) opinions on the matter of *ahiṃsā* and meat eating. He asserts that this section incorporates three different positions with regard to the practice: an initial stage where the eating of animals is allowed, a second stage where it

23. Cf. "Two commandments . . . belong to the most characteristic features of Hinduism and rightly form the foundation of their religion . . . : *ahiṃsā*, which literally means 'non-violence' [and] 'the protection of cows' " (Alsdorf 2010, 1).

is forbidden outside a ritual framework, and a third stage, where vegetarianism is propagated and animal sacrifice is completely outlawed (Alsdorf 2010). These inconsistencies indicate the existence of a lively discussion at the time of the *Manusmṛti*'s canonization. Whether these stages appeared in subsequent historical order and eventually evolved into *ahiṃsā* cannot, however, be definitively established.

Hans-Peter Schmidt (2010) disagrees with Alsdorf's thesis that there was no concept of *ahiṃsā* in the Vedic times. In his view, *ahiṃsā* was originally associated with renouncement and Brahmanic rituals, both in Vedic and later periods. Schmidt understands *ahiṃsā* as an oath similar to other Brahmanic vows and therefore "not expected of the common man" (Schmidt 2010, 103). The concept of non-violence was thus, according to him, already present in the Vedic tradition but only binding for a particular group: the Vedic *brahmacārin*. Schmidt sees parallels between them and the later *saṃnyāsins* and concludes that certain parts of the Vedic ritual were the predecessors of *vānaprastha*, the fourth stage of renunciation as found in the *Manusmṛti* (Schmidt 2010, 123). As evidence, he cites the similarity between the ritual vows of each group (Schmidt 2010, 124). With this, Schmidt puts forth his main thesis—that Vedic sacrifice developed into symbolic, or interiorized, sacrifice and eventually to renunciation (Schmidt 2010, 124).

Heestermann (1984) also rejects Alsdorf's thesis of the later development of non-violence and supports Schmidt's argument for a Vedic theory of *ahiṃsā*. Heestermann, however, investigates the origins of the concept in greater detail (Heestermann 1984, 121). His main argument is that violence was already regulated by the Vedic ritual and became replaced by some "system of ritualism that minimized" brute force (Heestermann 1984, 122). According to him, this is conspicuous in the *śrauta* rituals, where the (animal) victim was no longer beheaded but instead was led away from the sacrificial stake to a different location where it was then suffocated. This step from a bloody act, execution directly in the center of the ritual, to a bloodless suffocation at a distant location demonstrates for him the roots of non-violence in ritual.

Heestermann further claims that the connection between *ahṃisā* and vegetarianism was not at all natural in the beginning and emerged only out of a Brahmanical ritual. As proof, he presents the practices performed by the sacrificer (Skt. *dīkṣita*), who was not allowed to consume any meat during the ritual. Like Schmidt, Heestermann interprets this as a forerunner to the later renunciation concept and asserts that *ahiṃsā* and vegetarianism were linked as a result of these vows (Heestermann 1984, 123). Buddhists and Jains, both strong advocates of non-violence, had—according to Heestermann—no particular connection to vegetarian philosophy (Heestermann 1984, 126).

In her work, Wendy Doniger posits that a vigorous debate on the morality of animal slaughter was already present at the time of the *Brāhmaṇas* (800–600 BCE). She also suggests that some Sanskrit texts hint at the auspiciousness of sacrificing cows and horses (Doniger 2011, 150). Doniger argues that advances in breeding and cultivation of plants, combined with the development of different philosophical approaches, eventually led to an uneasiness concerning blood sacrifice. In her opinion, this developing discomfort became open criticism in later works such as the *Mahābhārata* (Doniger 2011, 150–151).

To sum up, many scholars in the field suggest that what was originally a practice of violent sacrifice was later reinterpreted in texts that increasingly critiqued bloody practices to align with their philosophical stance on sacrifice. This turned attention from outer to inner sacrifice (Michaels 2006, 274). The act of *bali* was abandoned in Brahmanic strands of Hinduism and became "ideologically devalued in relation to vegetarian worship" (Fuller 1992, 88). Given this state of affairs, Urban writes, the survival of the practice in spite of its increasing rejection was only possible due to the existence of *śākta* and tantric traditions (Urban 2011, 52). I believe this position is too general since not all traditions in which blood sacrifice plays a role can be subsumed under the concept of tantra. The case study of the Devipujak-Vagris—introduced below—is just one such exception.

Very important for the *bali* tradition are certain village or clan Goddesses who serve as protectors of a geographical area or a genealogical collective. People's relationship to such deities can be very fragile. Some of them must be frequently appeased with animal sacrifices to protect the clan or the village from their wrath (such is the case with the Devipujak-Vagris). Others, however, must be "heated up" in order to strengthen them for a fight against outside enemies (Malinar 2009, 149–150). Many such practices would not fall under the category of *tantra* as such.

Over recent centuries, South Asia has seen a proliferation of movements against blood rituals. Increasingly, groups and individuals turn to *ahiṃsā* and the protection of animals in rituals (see, for example, the story of the Kali priest in the next section). Often these politics are associated with newer reform movements that aim to convert tribes to a "purer" version of Hinduism. There is, however, a gap between the work of classical Indologists and their focus on Sanskrit texts in aiming to understand the origin of *ahiṃsā* and then the later colonial period, which kindled new discussions on non-violence.

Susan Bayly has sought to close this gap. According to Bayly, a history of non-violence or vegetarian politics must take into account economic developments of the nineteenth century. Bayly shows that a certain moral code of *dharma* had at that time become increasingly important among traders

for the sake of their reputation and "credit-worthiness" (Bayly 1999, 217). Furthermore, commercial castes suffered under the derogatory attitude of the Brahmins, who considered traders to be beneath them. Mimicking the higher caste's ritual practices or diet was one way for many low-caste communities to react to the inequality between them (Srinivas 1989). In this environment, the values of non-violence and *ahiṃsā* began to emerge as primary signifiers for group identity. The rejection of meat and alcohol was already a trend among commercial communities starting from the late eighteenth century (Bayly 1999, 217). By the early twentieth century, different clusters of such trading communities had formed a distinct "bania-merchant culture" (Bayly 1999, 217). As the honor of a trading family was directly connected to their trustworthiness, many started to follow a general strain of *ahiṃsā*, "which told the man of means to consign his wealth to meritorious purposes" (Bayly 1999, 218). Public displays of piety became common, and wealthy merchants took on the patronage of temples—mainly in the Vaishnava tradition—or cow shelters (Hin. *gauśālā*). The turn toward *ahiṃsā* thus helped trading communities acquire and maintain a certain reputation and thus keep business ties alive. By this adherence to higher caste values, they sought to prove that the Vaishyas were indeed more closely related to the two upper classes than to the lower Shudra communities. Thus, it was as a result of these economic and social advantages that *ahiṃsā* as a way of life began to flourish among the trading middle class.

Furthermore, Hindu reform movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were also important factors in the agitation against *bali* and the spreading of *ahiṃsā*. They were often highly influenced by Western conceptions of modernity and enlightenment and also took up the issue in their attempts to reject the "superstitious" practices of folk Hinduism. In spite of opposition to the colonial ideology, many Indian intellectuals also supported these movements. Their writings eventually contributed to the reformation of numerous Hindu traditions in keeping with the values of British Protestantism. One of the central actors of that time was Ram Mohan Roy (1772–1833), who played a leading role in establishing the Brahmo Samaj, a renaissance movement of the nineteenth century. Roy campaigned against the self-immolation of widows (Hin. *satī*) and agitated for a more "rational" approach to Hindu practices. This included the denial of a wide array of beliefs and practices that Roy, who had been educated in the West, deemed irrational and groundless. Roy was influenced by the ideas of the first Orientalists, such as William Jones (1746–1794) and H. T. Colebrook (1765–1837), who had begun translating Sanskrit texts on law, philosophy, and literature (King 1999). Colebrooke was of the opinion that although civilization

had originated in Asia, the West had quickly eclipsed the East's development, and Asia was now in a state of decline. In Colebrooke's view, the Hindus of the South Asian subcontinent had forgotten or misunderstood their own texts and were now lost in superstitious practices and idolatry (Kopf 1969, 39–40). In those early days of South Asian Oriental studies, scholars were searching for some kind of a "golden age" in the Indian tradition that had been lost over the centuries. It was this Orientalist admiration for an alleged long-lost utopia that inspired many reformers at that time. Roy was particularly impressed by Orientalist concepts; Kopf even suggests that Roy's teachings were largely based upon Colebrook's article, "Essay of the Vedas" (1805), which Roy reproduced and gradually incorporated into the foundations of the Brahmo Samaj (Kopf 1969, 198).

Equally or perhaps even more influential than the Brahmo Samaj was the Arya Samaj, another Hindu reform movement founded by Dayananada Sarasvati (1824–1883), who succeeded in creating a powerful institutional foundation over a period of years. Sarasvati believed that the truth could only be found in the Veda and other classical Sanskrit texts, which required intense study of Vedic and Sanskrit grammar. He also reproduced Orientalist notions of the "golden age," regarding modern Hinduism as corrupted and highly superstitious (Jones 1981, 28). To oppose this development, Sarasvati introduced the *śuddhi* (Hin. purity) movement to reconvert people from Christianity and Islam to the Arya version of Hinduism. Notwithstanding the heterogeneity between the two movements, the Brahmo and the Arya Samaj found common ground in their strong opposition to elements of "folk religion" widespread within Hindu practice. Blood sacrifice was "a clear case in point" (Fuller 1992, 101)—a conspicuous remnant of an alleged superstitious past that, in the reformers' view, must be overcome by reason.

In sum, debate about *ahiṃsā* and the legitimacy of blood sacrifice on the subcontinent has enjoyed a long and controversial history. Although Sanskrit texts may speak only from the perspective of a particular elite, inconsistencies in these texts show that disagreement concerning the use or misuse of violence in sacrifice was already present at the time of the texts' canonization. With the rise of trading castes in the north and the west of India, formerly elite—that is, Brahmin or Rajput—practices were adopted by the Bania communities, who adhered to *ahiṃsā* in a bid to enhance their reputation and social status. Later Hindu reform movements blended their opposition to *bali* with colonial notions of enlightenment, continuing to agitate against the use of violence in ritual.

The recent ban inside the Hinglaj Valley has rearticulated and reiterated elements of this long-standing debate. Among Hindus within Pakistan,

arguments against *bali*, too, frequently appeal to education and progress in an attempt to counter superstition. What has prominently emerged within the valley, however, is the association of *bali* with Islamic rituals and the assertion that the practice should thus be shunned by the Hindus of Pakistan.

6.11 Bali *in Everyday Pakistan*

In Pakistan, controversy surrounding blood sacrifice has featured a line of arguments similar to those present in the long-standing debate on the practice within Hinduism more generally. Thus, they relate to ideas of progress and rationality, but today they also draw to a greater extent on the differences between Muslim and Hindu religious identities noted above. Since the slaughtering of goats at *baqra ʿīd* is particularly conspicuous in Pakistani public life, some Hindus oppose *bali* on the basis of it being something that only Muslims do. Both of these arguments will be exemplified in the following.

In the spring of 2012, I interviewed a member of the Meghwar community from the interior Sindh. The Pakistani Meghwars, a scheduled caste, frequently sacrifice animals to their clan Goddess. However, according to some Meghwars, the community has significantly curtailed this practice in recent years. "Now these things are completely ceasing [to be practiced]. And the reason is 'awareness,'" as one member told me in 2012.[24] One reason cited by an interviewee for this shift is the influence of "educated people" within it who no longer approve of such practices. When I asked him whom the label "educated people" refers to, he described them as "those who are against the traditions of their own community."[25] I interpret this statement as suggesting that sacrificial rituals are a part of the community's superstitious past, which is to be overcome gradually through progress. It also implies that Meghwars who have received a "proper" education (an education *not* obtained from the elders of their community) would automatically disapprove of such traditions today and thus shoulder the responsibility of creating "awareness" leading to their abolition. After a pause, my interviewee added: "See, the Hindus notice how the Muslims are doing sacrifice [Urd. *qurbānī*] and so they try as much as possible to avoid that!" Here, the practice plays the role of a characteristic distinguishing Muslims from Hindus. According to my interviewee, even though the community has not arrived at this point, the Hindu Meghwars will one day understand that such practices are not "right" for a Hindu to carry out. I heard

24. "*Ab ye cīzeṃ xatm ho rahīṃ haiṃ bil'kul. Us kī vajah hai awareness.*"

25. "*Jo ap'nī community kī rasmoṃ ke xilāf haiṃ.*"

similar opinions from many other communities who, at least publicly, rejected the idea of *bali* as outdated for Hindus in general.

The second example shows how *bali* is used to draw a line between "educated" and "uneducated" members within the Hindu community. It is an excerpt from a conversation between a Karachi Hindu named Sanjesh, a Kali Mata *pujārī* from the interior of Sindh, and me. This exchange took place in a relaxed environment in a Karachi temple and concerned the Hinglaj festival, the work of the HSM, and certain practices of ritual healers within the Hindu community. After Sanjesh had talked about the many cheaters and frauds who pose as healers (Hin. *bhopās*) today and thereby take advantage of the ignorant (Hin. *an'paṛh*) Hindus and Muslims, I asked him about genuine (Hin. *sahī*) healers, which brought our conversation to the concepts of *bali* and *pyālā denā*. "*Pyālā denā*" literally means "to give a cup," a practice carried out on particular occasions such as *navarātri*, when the *bhopā* embodies the Goddess and consumes a cup (Hin. *pyālā*) of fresh blood from a rooster or a male goat.

Q. Are there any genuine *bhopās*?

SANJESH. Well there are negative powers and there is *śakti*. If you perform a tantric ritual [Skt. *sādhanā*] for negative powers, they will do your work. What one sees is only the physical appearance—if you look any deeper, then you will find the subtle energy [Urd. *rūḥāniyyat*]. There are spirits and ghosts. Look at him [points at the *pujārī*]. He kept spirits [*bhūt pā'lnā*] for a long time. If he let one loose, then it might also catch you. He captured many. But you [referring to me, the interviewer] have your energy, and if you study the *śāstras* [Skt. religious texts], then the spirits won't catch you [both laugh]. But people who are inexperienced [*anāṛī*], they fall for them [points at the Kali *pujārī* and laughs].

PUJĀRĪ [ADDRESSING ME]. No, no, they won't catch you! People must be very frightened.

S. But now he reads the *Gītā*, now he is set right [*sudhar gayā*].

P. Now I read the *Gītā*, I am submerged in the *Gītā* [*gītā ke aṃdar hūṃ*].

S. Now he is okay. Since he started to sit here with me he became proper [laughs].

P. Before I always gave the *pyālā*. It was necessary. Every *kālī caudas*[26] I had to go to the temple and there I had to give the *pyālā*. I single-heartedly did that [*asal kar'tā thā*]. Then someone told me, "Friend, this stuff is not right." But how was it my fault? You see, I only knew this. Isn't this the fault of the

26. Fourteenth day of the *aśvin* month.

one who told me? The one who showed me this road—it is his fault, right? He was my Guru, you know. So, after I thought about that for a long time, I decided that I will still go to my temple, this is necessary, but from then onwards I would take a coconut with me. So, I started to offer coconuts to Kali Mata and I said: "Mother, accept this now instead."

s. You know he has been coming to my *Gītā* class for a long time, so you see it gradually has an effect on him. Those who come to the *Gītā* class and read the scriptures, they change; the rest will not change!

In this example, the denial of animal sacrifice is connected to the study of religious texts, in particular the *Bhagavad Gītā*. The *pujārī* acknowledges his wrongdoing himself and, to a certain extent in parallel to my Meghwar interviewee, turns against the superstitious traditions that his teachers taught him. The interpretation of the *Gītā* with a strong emphasis on *ahiṃsā* (Hin.) and vegetarianism may have its roots in the presence of religious texts sponsored and distributed in Pakistan by the ISKCON society. The ISKCON is one of the few Hindu communities in Pakistan that distributes such works and openly follows a proselytizing agenda, which has enjoyed particular success among the Dalit (untouchable, from Hin. meaning "broken") communities in urban areas. Its publications are disproportionately present at festivals and in temples where religious literature is sold. The only *Bhagavad Gītā* translation into Urdu I have encountered so far is that of Shri Prabhupada, who has a particular interest in the principle of *ahiṃsā*.

In both interviews, it seemed as if the performance of sacrifice represented a question of identity, and for my Meghwar interviewee, even an act that could in itself distinguish Hindus from Muslims. This is echoed by the visitors at the shrine, where one devotee once said "We are Hindus, we should not kill animals." As is clear from the foregoing examples, *bali* certainly assumes a key position within discussions of Hindu practice inside and outside of the Hinglaj Valley.

Laclau and Mouffe's terminology introduced earlier is useful at this point. For the interviewees with whom I discussed the concept, *bali* had shifted from a mere moment within a set of various practices into a nodal point (or truth-claim), with the ability to separate "good" from "bad" Hindus. In some of my interviews, people assigned to the practice a central role with the potential to represent a whole set of characteristics, thus polarizing communities according to their opinion of *bali*. Contradicting beliefs about its legitimacy create a distinct line between opponents and proponents of the practice. As a nodal point, animal sacrifice creates an equivalential chain of attributes, for example, uneducated, low caste, and even Muslim. But this does not only fracture the community. The

classification of these various heterogeneous communities according to their opinion of *bali* also helps to create a more homogeneous opposing community. A "we" becomes constructed as a community binds together through its common denial of one particular practice as foreign to an actual tradition (cf. how Khatri [1973, 10] called the practice a foreign element). Positive or negative opinions of *bali* thus makes it possible to identify such heterogeneous identities as low caste, low class, or Muslim in the face of an opposing other. Of course, it is not possible to assume only one single nodal point within one particular discourse (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 139). There is a multitude of nodal points and truth-claims that make up Hinglaj. There are many narratives or practices that polarize the community, but *bali* occupies a particularly interesting and central position simply because its recent ban followed a set of contingent events, which only later were reinterpreted through a religious lens.

To be effective, any such exclusion requires a network of tools and institutional means endowing it with the power to successfully repeat the rejected practice. At this point, the agency of authors, reform movements, and temple committees becomes important. In the case of Hinglaj, the HSM possesses the primary ability to create an atmosphere of acceptance or denial of certain practices. Even though the origins of the recent ban were rather contingent, the prohibition swiftly became a defining characteristic of the *melās* within the valley, foremost the celebration at the time of *baqra ʿīd*. This was only possible through certain institutional means that disseminated news of the prohibition and contributed to its consistent enforcement during the annual festivals. Many visitors at Hinglaj portrayed animal sacrifice as an Islamic practice and thus in contradiction to their own Hindu identity, oblivious to the long tradition of *bali* among many Hindu communities in the area, particularly at the Kali shrine in the same valley.

6.12 Resistance to the Ban: The Devipujak-Vagris of Karachi

In spite of its rapid rise in popularity, however, the ban on sacrifice at Hinglaj has not found favor among all Hindu communities in Pakistan. The Devipujak-Vagris live in Bhimpura, in the heart of Karachi. The community consists of about fifty to sixty households, belonging mainly to the families of Bhao and Bhachu, the elders of the Ghorava and Oughriya clan respectively.[27] Each man

27. The Vagris supplied me with the spelling of this and other names in this section. It is possible that they differ in other surroundings.

plays a central role in the community's ceremonies and general decision-making processes. During the weekly *ḥāẓrī* (Urd. presence, appearance) sessions, when the various goddesses and ancestors possess the *bhopā*—the community's spiritual leader and genealogical expert—the names of the two elders are often invoked in reference to their whole families (e.g., "children of Bhao!" "family of Bhachu!"). The current *bhopā* of the Ghorava family is Lali Bhua, the son of Bhao, who serves as the primary medium through which the Goddess addresses the different Vagri families. Even though the Oughriyas call upon different ancestors and descend from a different genealogy than the Ghoravas, Lali Bhua also performs their necessary family rituals. There are also a few other Vagri families living in the compound, but most community members descend from one of these two patriarchs. Their dominance is visible in, among a number of places, the construction of the communities' *maṭh* (Hin.), the place where the sacrifices are performed. There, two separate fireplaces (Hin. *dhūnī*) are kept for the members of Ghorava and the Oughriya families, while a third one is designated for use by all other families in the compound. During larger celebrations, like the *navarātri*, all the *dhūnīs* are treated equally, and the community worships the Goddess in uniform fashion.

The Devipujak-Vagris live in a confined Hindu area typical of Karachi, behind the Jagnath *akhāṛā*, which houses one of the oldest active Hinglaj temples in the city. Just on the other side of the street sits the Nagnath *akhāṛā*, for many years the convening point for pilgrims wanting to undertake the pilgrimage to Hinglaj (see Chapter 3). Some years ago, the area around the Nagnath *akhāṛā*, which once consisted of many acres of open land, was turned into a commercial space with stores and workshops. During the 1992 riots in the country, the Vagri community took shelter in the Hinglaj temple of the Jagnath *akhāṛā*, while the Nagnath temple was largely destroyed in the violence. Today, visitors are not allowed inside the site, and the temple is no longer frequented by devotees. The temple at the Jagnath *akhāṛā* holds particular importance for the Vagris, as it is here where the *bhopā* assumes the voice of the residing Goddess to address the crowd in weekly *ḥāẓrī*.

The Devipujaks are far from Karachi's most affluent Hindu community. Most of the older members of the Devipujak community sell dried fruits by trade; quite a few sell their wares in Karachi's Empress Market or at the far end of the city, at the Sunday Bazaar in the posh Defence Housing Authority area, where they sell nuts and snacks. But some, especially those of the younger generation, today engage in other occupations and support the community with their salaries.

The Ghorava family originally came from a village called Palvodar in the Gujarati district of Bhavnagar. The village holds particular importance for

the Ghorava cosmology and ritual practice because the community's main *maṭh*, the slaughtering place for animals, is located there. This village is frequently referred to in their *rāg* (Hin. songs; lit. musical mode, harmony) and in elders' stories. According to Vagri history, the community migrated back and forth between Sindh and Gujarat for many generations and, like other nomadic groups, were eventually forced to settle on one side of the border after the Partition. Since there is no written account of their movement, the clan's detailed history can only be based on speculation. The Ghorava family, however, estimates that their forefathers first arrived in Karachi about two hundred years ago.

The Vagris do not consider themselves a part of the Dalit or Harijan[28] communities of Pakistan; they see their caste as occupying a place subordinate only to that of the Brahmins. In an interview in 2010, a member of the clan explained:

> The Harijans are different from us. We are the sons of the Goddess [*devīputra*]; there is a night and day difference between them and us. They clean the bathrooms we do not do that. I mean they are Hindus and we are Hindus, but in India the Harijans live outside of our villages. They are also not allowed in our *maṭh*.

The group legitimizes this attitude by claiming a close, direct contact with the Goddess through the trance of the *bhopās*. This intimate bond, according to them, requires constant reification through the sacrifice of animals. It also requires strict adherence to caste segregation. According to the Devipujaks, their elevated caste status forbids them to accept water or food from any other low-caste Hindu communities, like the Meghwar or the Hindu Kathiyavari, who live in the nearby Narayanpur area of Ranchorline in Karachi. Notwithstanding such claims, I witnessed various examples where this discriminatory requirement was not strictly implemented. My assistant, for example, called himself a Marwari Harijan without any hesitation, and I never saw any acts of discrimination when he accompanied me to the Vagris' festive activities. On another occasion, however, I witnessed disapproving statements by the Vagris toward

28. The term "Harijan" was used by Mahatma Gandhi to include all the untouchable castes. In Pakistan, the term encompasses a wide range of meaning but is often used in a political context. Many of my interviewees hailing from "lower castes" were secretive about their familial background and seemed uncomfortable with the topic. Today, the work of many NGOs, especially the Pakistan Hindu Seva Trust, raises awareness of the problem of discrimination and caste stratification.

other Dalit communities. I once brought up the topic of Vagri traditions in Pakistan with one of my colleagues who himself was a Meghwar social worker. Although he is very active in various social justice issues, my mentioning of the Vagris caused him to shrug and deprecatingly refer to them as a "very dirty community."

The bond between the Goddess, in her various forms, and the community is one of the main identity signifiers for the Vagris in Karachi. The Devipujaks frequently emphasized their close connection to the Goddess, which, as they say, proves itself in the Devī's willingness to talk to the community through the mouth of the *bhopā*. While other communities in Karachi (for example the Marwaris) are able to speak only to the *vīrs*, the Goddess's servants, the Vagris by their reckoning go straight to the Goddess. As put by one Vagri community member, "They [the Marwaris] speak to the secretary; we go directly to the president." Another distinguishing factor between the groups, according to the Vagris, is a difference in approach to the practice of ritual sacrifice. The Marwari community of Narayanpur, for example, engages in an annual sacrifice of buffalos. And while they understand buffalos to be the greatest possible sacrifice to the Goddess, the Vagris see this ritual as an abomination. For them, the buffalo is an impure creature that ought not be touched or sacrificed. Yet this is apparently specific to this community; other Vagris do slaughter buffalos and, similar to the Marwaris, see it as a more significant act than the mere sacrifice of goats (Werth 1996, 143).

Such antipathy between low-caste communities in Pakistan seems to be quite common in Karachi. The Vagris doubtlessly suffer from a certain amount of prejudice in many parts of South Asia, and cleanliness and language seem to represent the main issues (Werth 1996, 143). According to Bhao Tulsi, this harassment was one of the main reasons the community decided to change its name from Vagri to Devipujak. Fierce debates about the relative positions of Dalit sub-castes is a widespread phenomenon, as shown by Moffatt (1979) in his study of several such communities in Tamil Nadu. In this particular case in Karachi, however, such differentiation seemed more important on an imaginary or ideological level, where the Vagris distinguish between themselves and the other (lower caste) communities within the Hindu cosmology. In their daily contact with other Hindu communities, such segregation was not very obvious. I observed this during one of the regular Thursday night sessions, when a group of Kathiyavari Hindus appeared in the Jagnath *akhārā*. The Devipujakas were slightly annoyed with the uninvited guests but acted very hospitably, sharing food and water with them.

The Vagris' dramatic weekly *ḥāẓrī* sessions effectively perpetuate the power of the Goddess and her close relationship to the community. In these

sessions, every Thursday, the various *kul'devīs* (Hin. clan Goddess) and the group's ancestors—foremost Tulsi and Haza Dada, the grandfather and great-grandfather of Lali—address the community members through the mouth of the *bhopā*, Lali Bhua. The *bhopā*'s wild dance to the sound of the *ḍam'rū* (Hin. a small drum with a playing surface on both sides) is called "shaking" (Hin. *hāl mār'nā*), a state of trance during which he repeatedly addresses the community in short, excited sentences. These brief exclamations usually refer to personal or community troubles and affirm the support of the deities and ancestors (e.g., "I will kill those who cast a spell on you!"). Sometimes, such statements refer to outside individuals who ask the Goddess for help with their personal problems ("Ramesh, you only called on me one time, but I will answer you twenty-one times!"). These Thursday meetings also commemorate particular incidents in the community's past, as when the Goddess saved the Ghorava's ancestors from misfortune, or how she once abandoned one of the family's *bhopās*. The weekly meetings form a central piece of Vagri cosmology—in the midst of which we find, again and again, the centrality of the sacrifice (Schaflechner 2013, 2015a).

6.12.1 The Necessity of Sacrifice: "*Bali Lāzmī Hai*"

The ritual sacrifice of male goats and roosters plays an important role within Devipujak-Vagri cosmology (Werth 1996, 323; Mann 1980, 110). For the community in Karachi, this tradition dates back to mythological times when the Devi was forced to consume the blood of demons during a battle in order to counteract their continuous reproduction. In my conversations with them, the Devipujak never directly referred to the *Devī Māhātmaya*, but their version of the episode closely parallels the story of the Goddess's struggle with the demon Raktabija (Devadatta 2003, 130–135). According to Lali Bhua, it was because of this fight that the Goddess developed a taste for blood as sacrifice from her worshippers (Hin. *xūn caṛhānā*). This mytho-historic narrative is the reason cited for the central role of blood sacrifice among the Devipujaks today.

As a result of the episode, the Devipujak community is obliged, on a regular basis, to offer the blood of animals to the Goddess (mostly appearing in the form of Kali or Khodiyar). If the community ceases to do so, I was frequently told, the Goddess would herself take the life of a member of the community.[29] If it came to this, they explained, the Goddess would cause accidents, or bring disease upon the community. Since diseases do not necessarily involve

29. "*Ham agar na deṃ, to hamāre meṃ se koi ek jāegā. mātā bali xud leṃgī!*"

the spilling of blood, it seems it is not simply the consumption of blood the Vagri Goddess is interested in, but the general life energy of her subjects. So, although the Devi can be appeased with blood, she is still always ready to take life from the Vagri community with disease. As such, the ritual slaughter within the Vagri community is not simply a *quid pro quo* action used for the fulfillment of a wish, as seen among other Vagri communities (Mann 1980); the *bali* is in fact viewed as obligatory for the health and security of the whole community. While many other Hindu groups in Sindh, and in fact all over Pakistan, sacrifice animals for the fulfillment of certain wishes or during particular rites of passage, for the Devipujaks, the sacrifice is a mandatory, regular act of maintenance necessary for the community's health and well-being. The importance of feeding the clan Goddesses (as well as gods and ancestors) with blood or life seems to be one connecting point between many Vagri communities in South Asia (Mann 1980, 100–101; Werth 1996, 324).

The shrine of Hinglaj is one of the main religious centers for the Devipujak community of Karachi. Even though Hinglaj is not one of the Ghorava-Vagris' clan Goddess, there are other families among the Vagris who worship Hinglaj as their *kul'devī* (Werth 1996, 350). But while the Vagris are obliged to perform all their rites of passage at their ancestors' shrine in the village of Palvadar in Gujarat, they describe Hinglaj as their Hajj. For the community, it is the most important place in Hindu cosmology and ought to be visited by all Hindus once in their lifetime. The Devipujaks claim that their ancestors were the first to come to Hinglaj, and thus, they conclude, their knowledge about the shrine and the practices there—including *bali*—is the most legitimate, capturing the "actual" tradition of the place.

But even within the Devipujak community, views differ as to the relationship devotees should have with the desert shrine. Bhao Tulsi, for example, went to the shrine exactly once in his life, in the mid-1970s with a group of devotees from Karachi. Bhao has never returned there since; in his opinion, the journey to Hinglaj should only be made once in the lifetime. His son, Lali Bhua, phrased it like this in 2010:

> I have never gone to Hinglaj and I also do not intend to go any time soon. The only time I will go will be when I intend to stay there. Then I will cut my hair and renounce my daily life. Before this stage the Mother has prohibited me from going.

Yet the young men in the Devipujak community view the shrine differently. All of them have been to Hinglaj, and most have been several times; even Lali's son has repeatedly visited the shrine. At every visit, however, each member of

the Devipujak community is obliged to give *bali* (in the form of a rooster or a male goat) to the Goddess Kali, or else risk her wrath. For the Vagris, Kali is the guard (Hin. *caukīdār*) of the Goddess Hinglaj, and thus they must appease Kali before making their way on to Hinglaj.[30] For the Devipujaks, without Kali's blessing, the whole *darśan* at Hinglaj is in vain. One group member once directly blamed the HSM for ignoring this rule (Hin. *niyam*) and connected the accidents inside the valley to this refusal to provide the sacrifice. According to him, these mishaps began occurring at exactly the same time that the organization banned the sacrifice of animals. Furthermore, the recent introduction of a substitute practice—a mere symbolic offering of a goat to Kali by cutting into the animal's ear, allowing a few drops of blood to spill, and then setting it free inside the valley—has only served to greater upset the Devipujak community. As one member said in 2012:

> Since the Hinglaj Sheva Mandali has prohibited animal sacrifice, every year there are some accidents. The Sindhis [read Lohanas] now just cut the ear of the goat and let it free at [Kali's] temple, but the Mother does not like that. Because of that nonsense every year someone has to have an accident. In one way or another, the Mother takes her gift [*bheṃṭ*]. Just imagine how angry the Mother gets when people already have brought a goat with them and then do not give it to her. Every time you go to Kali Mata, you have to give a sacrifice and you have to give the blood to the Goddess.

Incidents like the injury of one of the walking pilgrims in 2012 along the road (see Chapter 4) support the Devipujak's belief that the banning of sacrifice has brought misfortune to the *melā*.[31] They strongly oppose the work of the HSM and its way of altering the landscape and practices in the Hinglaj Valley. When I told them the story of the Kali priest who stopped sacrificing goats due to his study of the scriptures (see above), someone said:

> I just think that what he [the Kali *pujārī*] is doing is wrong. Education does not tell people that they should not give any sacrifices anymore.

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30. In 2010, one member of the community told me: "Before our forefathers came here on camels. At that time Kali was really here [*svayaṃ thī*]. People needed to give the sacrifice here; it was necessary . . . . If you went to Hinglaj without giving a sacrifice to Kali she came after you and slapped you."

31. After the accident occurred, I met in Karachi again with my interviewee, who had also heard of the incident. He felt validated and interpreted the situation as the wrath of the

> See, the Mother comes in different forms and every Mother needs particular things. Sometimes we offer sweets, sometimes dried fruits, sometimes bangles, and sometimes we give animals. We only give what the Mother demands from us. People should not stop this. As long as I am not able to make my Mother happy, she will not want my happiness. She will even destroy the whole universe [*sarva naṣṭ kar degī pure brahmāṃḍ ko*].[32]

During another conversation with the community in 2012, when the topic of *bali* was touched upon, a young Devipujak man added:

> These people [who are against the *bali*] are mainly the educated ones, those who read and write. They have become rich overnight. They have to care about other people's opinion and they are afraid what people might say. They are their own kind, who have no knowledge anymore. Their whole concept [of the world] is gone. (Schaflechner 2013, 7:10)

Recently, these different takes on sacrifice started to clash together at Hinglaj as it became one of the main sites in Pakistan for Hindu religious practice. With its prohibition in 2004, *bali* has become a contentious issue which produces two antagonistic camps. For communities like the Devipujak of Karachi, the act of animal sacrifice occupies a central role within their cosmology, while for others—and due to a variety of contingent reasons—the ritual became increasingly associated with a Muslim (and therefore unfit Hindu) practice. The prohibition of the custom at Hinglaj, a place of significant importance for the community, has, therefore, triggered and reinvented an argument about its legitimacy. It turned from a mere moment of the Hinglaj discourse to a highly politicized truth-claim. While the ritual has been commonly practiced by a variety of communities and also by members of the HSM before, now the Mandali connects *bali* to obsolete Hindu practices and actively enforces its abolishment. The Devipujaks, on the other hand, claim that the very abolishment of the practice has led to accidents and misfortune for the whole Hindu community. One side characterizes *bali* as backward, obsolete, or Muslim, while the other frames sacrifice as the oldest, "original" practice,

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Goddess who was robbed of her sacrifice by the temple organization. He also mentioned some other cases that came to his mind when people had slipped or gotten lost in the valley.

32. From an interview in 2012.

the only vehicle through which an understanding of the Goddess and the community's safety are possible. For both sides, "*bali*" creates completely different tropological shifts with the power to separate the visitors at the shrine into opposing fractions. The main authority at Hinglaj, the HSM, did not enforce the ban due to their traditional and historic rejection of *bali*, but rather started it because of organizational and political reasons. Once the HSM had begun to propagate the ban, it rearticulated a century-old debate that led to a confrontation among various groups, all claiming Hinglaj as a ritual space.

6.13 Conclusion

The increasingly plural religious landscape at Hinglaj—seen in the vast crowds it attracts from a wide range of castes, languages, ethnicities, and nationalities—has not led to the democratization of authority over the interpretation of the shrine's traditions. The *phālgun/caitra* gathering in April draws a huge variety of devotees who come to celebrate the Goddess. During these festivals, many Hindu welfare organizations are also active inside the valley, advertising their philanthropic work for the community. Together with their humanitarian goals, these organizations often also propagate a certain idea of "proper" Hindu behavior, which they eagerly explain to the "ignorant" visitors. Some organizations, like the Pakistan Hindu Seva Trust, distribute leaflets with prayers and use the festivals as a means of coming into regular contact with a network of Hindus from all over Pakistan. But in spite of this wide potential for pluralism, and a range of Hindu welfare organizations being present at and attempting to spread their notions of "real" Hinduism in the valley, recent years have seen the mushrooming influence of the Hinglaj temple committee, the HSM, which seeks to perpetuate its own interpretation of the tradition at the shrine as the original one.

Since its inception in 1986, the Mandali has promoted Hinglaj as a religious space for the entire Hindu community (Urd. *barādarī*). With its constant references to education and progress, the HSM is able to appeal to Hindus from a wide variety of backgrounds, thus elevating the shrine to the status of a holy place for all of Pakistan's Hindu castes and classes. Here, the HSM plays an important role in highlighting and promoting proto-ideological elements from a broader Hindu discourse, like *ahiṃsā* in ritual and diet, rearticulating and fixing them as characteristic parts of religiosity at Hinglaj.

By the utilization of certain operational means, like the work of trained volunteers, the erection of signs, and the construction of temples, the HSM works toward a certain unity and coherence of performances and narratives at the shrine. This unity is attempted through acts of governmentality that, in the

view of the Mandali, are oriented toward the "education" of the community. These acts, however, ultimately solidify the hegemony of a Lasi Lohana version of Hinduism at Hinglaj, which today is represented as the "real" or the "actual" tradition of the Goddess.

This process, however, is not a one-way street. As I have shown with the case study of *bali*, Hinglaj is not only a public Hindu space where sedimented identities clash together but rather an area where identities repeat themselves and also change. Although the ban may have originally been triggered by a host of organizational and infrastructural problems, today the prohibition is animated largely by concepts of "actual" Hindu behavior. The case study of the Hinglaj shrine shows how meaning is retroactively assigned to contingent circumstances, which then transform into significant truth-claims inside the valley. Important for the establishment of such nodal points is the repeated exclusion of other (narrative or ritual) elements, which helps to create a more homogeneous tradition at the shrine and gives the impression of a "Hindu-unity." So, while the prohibition may have begun as a result of unintentional influences, the HSM utilizes these incidents and solidifies them (through annual repetition) into the "true" Hindu practice at the shrine. This denial follows discourses of progress and education aligned with arguments advanced by religious reformers, but also presents itself in opposition to the Muslim sacrificial practice during the *baqra ʿīd* celebrations in Pakistan. The appeal of this denial is so influential at times that many pilgrims go to the shrine of Hinglaj specifically *because* animal sacrifice is (technically) banned there.

Pointed opposition to the ban also exists, mainly from lower-caste communities who also claim Hinglaj as a ritual space. As the example of the Devipujak community has shown, for such groups, the banning of *bali* represents a significant misunderstanding of the "actual" practices at the shrine. Since the Devipujaks claim that their ancestors were the first at Hinglaj, they also maintain that they possess the only true understanding of the shrine. In their opinion, it was those who have "no knowledge anymore" and who do not understand what the Mother really wants that imposed the prohibition. According to the Devipujak community, such a gross misunderstanding of the shrine's rules leads to misfortune and difficulties for the whole Hindu community at Hinglaj. The Devipujak-Vagris see it as their obligation to offer an animal every time they visit the valley not just for their own sake but also for the sake of others. Within these opposing discourses, the practice of *bali* is assigned contradictory characteristics. On the one side, it must be discarded in pursuit of a proper understanding of the Hindu tradition. But on the other, its completion is a primary safeguard against accidents and death; it is a practice so powerful that if it ceased to be, the Mother might even "destroy the whole universe."

In conclusion, it can be said that the banning of *bali* does not represent a stable marker for "Hinduness" as some Pakistani Hindus, and the HSM, would wish it to be. In other words, the sliding of meaning has not been suspended—the discourse is not closed, and the tradition at the shrine not (yet) "sedimented" (Butler 2011; Laclau 1990). Rather, it appears as a truth-claim with great importance for both communities—those who support the practice and those who oppose it. Never is this clash more obvious than during the annual festival in the valley. Both communities elevate the practice (or banning) of animal sacrifice to a level of symbolism capable of defining proper versus improper Hindu behavior. Thus, one's opinion of the age-old ritual in the Hinglaj Valley has today become nothing less than a fundamental question of identity.

Conclusion

PLACES FOR PUBLIC religious practice are scarce for the Pakistani-Hindu community. The reasons for this are numerous yet can generally be linked to a religiously and nationalistically charged atmosphere in the Islamic Republic. The Hindu religious minority faced particularly daunting security challenges in 2014 (see introduction), overshadowed only by the memory of the situation in 1992, when in retaliation for the destruction of the Babri Mosque by Hindu extremists, hundreds of temples were demolished by angry mobs, and Hindu property was looted all over Pakistan. Due to such insecurities, the shrine of Hinglaj represents a safe haven for undisturbed Hindu celebrations. Conveniently located close to a highway, yet far enough from urban centers and possible threats, Hinglaj provides a remote stage for public displays of Hindu faith and draws worshippers from all corners of the country. Thus the study of rituals and mytho-historic narratives at the shrine also supplies us with a glimpse into Hindu life in Pakistan.

The shrine's growing popularity, therefore, stems not only from its ancient history and references in some Sanskrit texts but also from the state of insecurity for Hindus as citizens of the Pakistani nation state. Even though previous governments granted certain legal protections to Pakistan's minorities, many marginalized communities—Muslim and non-Muslim alike—still find themselves vulnerable to attacks by religious zealots. Extremist groups have often targeted those at the edge of society in order to create an atmosphere of fear and suspicion. Hinglaj's success as a site secluded from urban disturbances also indicates to some degree the current precarious circumstances of Hindus living in the Islamic Republic.

Many more factors may have led to this focus on Hinglaj as a religious center for the whole Hindu *barādarī*. In any case, this priority has and continues to have a significant impact on the shrine's traditions and purportedly

ancient practices. In this context, two elements stand out as particularly important: the institutionalization of the pilgrimage by the Hinglaj Sheva Mandali (HSM) in 1986 and the completion of the Makran Coastal Highway (MCH) at the beginning of the new millennium. These two combined have helped the desert Goddess on the way to becoming one of the most important religious Hindu sites in the Islamic Republic. This surge of visitors, however, also opened a struggle for the tradition's foundation, aiming to define its present, past, and future. To sketch the dramatic changes that took place over the past thirty years, I first want to recall a few of this study's findings.

Identity

Unfortunately, detailed accounts about the Goddess Hinglaj and the demanding ritual journey to her abode prior to the pilgrimage's institutionalization in the 1980s are scarce. Inscriptions in Thatta, a city located on the eastern route to Hinglaj, suggest that a network of ritual journeys has been in place since the fourteenth century. This claim is supported by the mentioning of Hinglaj (as Hiṅgulā, Hiṅgulāja, Hiṅgulāṭa) in Sanskrit sources between the tenth and the fifteenth centuries. Such references, however, leave significant gaps, which make it impossible to conclusively speak about a continuous transmission of practices before the middle of the nineteenth century. Only in more recent centuries have a few colonial reports—together with some written sources in languages such as Bengali, Hindi, Gujarati, and Sindhi—cast some light onto the tradition's myths and rituals. It is mainly these later sources that give us an impression of the pilgrimage and its many different practices.

In the years before the establishment of the HSM, certain castes and communities, like the Brahmakshatriyas, the Charans, and the Kapris, used to visit the shrine of Hinglaj and worship the Goddess as patron or clan deity. Other local communities living in Sindh and in Balochistan, both Hindu and (Zikri) Muslim, also claim an ancient connection with the desert shrine. These and similar groups deem the Goddess their patron, creator, or savior, and many rituals and mytho-historic narratives revolving around Hinglaj help to strengthen their sense of identity. Until this day, their writings and oral traditions inform what we know about the Goddess and her ritual journeys.

The demanding journey also attracted adventurous pilgrims whose first-person travel accounts were published in the middle of the twentieth century. First and foremost, the Bengali novel *Marutīrtha Hiṃlāj* (*The Desert Pilgrimage to Hinglaj* [1957]) by Abadhut (Dulalchandra Mukhopadhyay), together with its 1959 movie adaptation helped to make the journey known to a broader

audience. Unfortunately, it is not completely clear if the similar literary account in Hindi by Devadatta Shastri (1977) proves a coherent pilgrimage practice at that time or, in fact, has been copied from the Bengali novel. In any case, these texts form the main basis upon which the pilgrimage's history and its recent alterations can be analyzed.

In all of these accounts, the physical journey to the shrine plays a particularly crucial role and is often praised as the fulfillment of the devotee's spiritual development. The location of the temple, in the far west of the South Asian subcontinent and enclosed in a hostile desert environment, has greatly contributed to the perception of the Goddess's powers. As a result of the journey's ardors, those returning alive from the dangerous pilgrimage were often celebrated as gifts from the Goddess herself, who protected them on their way. Their courage in undertaking the journey earned these pilgrims respect and social prestige. Many were (and still are in some cases) addressed as "Hinglajis," an honorific title for those who performed all the necessary rituals on the way. These Hinglajis owned a special position within their community as they were able to report on a distant and mystical journey that fellow devotees were not willing or able to experience for themselves.

Presumably, one of the oldest practices at the shrine and, in fact, the climax of the journey now as well as then, is the rebirthing ritual in which the devotee enters a tunnel underneath the image of the Goddess. Believers claim the Hinglaj *mūrti* to be *svayaṃbhū*, that is, generated of the mountainous stones through the will of the Goddess. This provides the image with a particular spiritual legitimacy. The rite of passage through the tunnel, therefore, becomes a performative act of rebirth out of the womb of the Goddess, sometimes even followed with mimicry of cries and gestures of newborn babies. This ritual, it is said, has the power to cleanse Hinglaj's followers of all their prior sins. For staunch devotees, it even marks the border between two spiritual stages, and many separate their life story into a part before and a part after the rebirth.

This makes clear that details of this old journey, let alone one continuous way of engaging with the Goddess through the centuries, cannot decisively be established. The events of the past thirty years, however, have shown how actors at the shrine aim to establish precisely such a historic continuity by rallying behind certain practices. This institutionalization of specific truth-claims not only influences the shrine's present and future, but, arguably, also has an impact on how the site's past is perceived. The following will highlight the changes succeeding the establishment of the HSM as well as the construction of the MCH around fifteen years later and the dynamics these events triggered.

Change

The construction of the MCH in 2001 helped raise awareness of the shrine's existence among thousands. This project, originally intended to boost economic development of the Balochistan coast, led to the unification, elaboration, and rearticulation of the pilgrimage, its route, and its rituals. While accounts from colonial and precolonial times document a variety of paths and practices on the way, the construction of the MCH unified the different routes into the valley, causing many pilgrimage stops to slip into disuse. Furthermore, transport arrangements such as bus connections and the work of tour operators not only increased the number of visitors to the shrine but also influenced the practices en route. In this way, many more stops not located in close proximity to the road—such as the *guru-śiṣya paṛāv*—were abandoned and eventually lost their significance.

The expansion of Karachi also exerted an influence in this process of change to the pilgrimage. Formerly important pilgrimage stops, especially places associated with the mytho-historic journey of Rama and his entourage, have disappeared over the years due to the rapid swelling of the city. This urban growth in Karachi and in villages on the way to the shrine also led to the pilgrimage's further elaboration and even to the evolution of new *paṛāv*. Today, many walking pilgrims visit temples or Hindu neighborhoods on their way to Hinglaj to receive blessings and food donations. This *coincidentia oppositorum*, that is, the triggering of a unification as well as an elaboration of the pilgrimage, is another result of the MCH's construction.

Furthermore, apart from generating new routes and novel modes of transportation, the construction of the road also revitalized the ancient practice of walking to Hinglaj. While in former times the danger of getting lost in the vast desert meant real life-threatening hazards, today, people can avoid such perils simply by following the course of the highway. This ease reinvigorated traditional occupations, practices, and ritual paraphernalia on the pilgrimage. Pilgrims today, for example, are quite familiar with the traditional concept of the *aguā*, the spiritual leader who used to guide the group through the desert. The *aguā*'s formerly critical role as a source of life-saving knowledge has however devolved into a peripheral one today, as the road leads devotees directly to the shrine without the assistance of a guide. Yet the diminishing of the *aguā*'s central role has not led to the total disappearance of their authority but, in some cases, has instead brought about its democratization, which led to new dynamics among walking groups in which each member bears more responsibility for the overall welfare of the group.

Infrastructural, institutional, and economic developments have influenced not just the pilgrimage *to* the Goddess but also the events *at* the shrine. Before the recent infrastructural development in Balochistan's coastal area, the grueling physical pilgrimage to Hinglaj was portrayed as a necessary cleansing process before devotees were allowed to perform the rituals at the temple. Today, however, many visitors ignore the majority of stops and rituals along the way and drive straight to the valley to worship the Goddess at her temple. Accordingly, the HSM advertises Hinglaj as one of the most important religious *places* of the Hindu *barādarī*, emphasizing the importance of the main festival at the shrine in April instead of the necessity of the physically challenging route. The result is that in just three decades, the Hinglaj *yātrā* evolved from a highly strenuous bodily experience and a once-in-a-lifetime undertaking to an annual sedentary festival that now represents an established event within the Pakistani-Hindu calendar.

This new focus on Hinglaj as locality, as opposed to its traditional perception as a demanding pilgrimage route plus some rituals at the shrine (as in the many years before the construction of the road), has also drawn attention to the valley's facilities. In recent years, the HSM gradually improved the infrastructure around the temple by constructing shelters, water tanks, and roads in and near the valley. Such projects were made possible by financial support from private national and international Hindu donors together with grants from the Balochistan government.

Solidification

The attention emerging out of the aforesaid events provoked a new wave of research and publications on the history of the shrine. Texts in Sindhi, Hindi, Gujarati, and Sanskrit were translated into Urdu and thus became accessible across caste and community boundaries. These translations, together with the swelling crowds and the resulting amalgamation of different rituals and practices at Hinglaj, lay bare huge variations within the tradition. In other words, the new accessibility in conjunction with an emphasis on the annual April *melā* brought together a diversity of truths that all claimed the Goddess in their own right. These truth-claims, however, are constative statements that not only hold true or not but also reveal their performative character. Truth-claims make things happen and thus bear an influence on people and their practices. These dynamics have become conspicuous after the tradition's dislocation starting about thirty years ago. The diversity of truths meeting at the shrine, however, does not only show how there is no homogeneous Hindu tradition when it comes to Hinglaj. It also reveals

how writers, politicians, and institutions attempt to produce precisely such a homogeneous tradition.

I call these developments resulting from the recent growth in awareness of Hinglaj, a solidification of tradition. In other words, what I have witnessed during my research and what is still obvious today is the tradition's dynamics of *becoming solid*. The HSM's and other individual actors' efforts to present certain practices and narrative elements as intrinsic, solid, or natural parts of the Goddess's tradition represent tangible forms of what is here termed solidification. Important at this juncture is that, unlike an already sedimented tradition, solidification describes a phenomenon that has not yet had the time to coagulate into a (fairly) uncontested terrain. To succeed, such processes require time and facilities for repeated propagation. The establishment of annual festivals at Hinglaj, for example, offers the means for a continuous interpellation of certain characteristics as the tradition's natural elements. Due to numerous recent adjustments and changes at the temple and its festival, however, prevailing and widely uncontested narratives have not yet fully emerged.

The Lohana members of the HSM stand at the forefront of this movement, claiming direct access to the Goddess's tradition through their long-term relationship with Hinglaj. Their ability to disseminate information inside and outside the valley, links with international devotees, and connections in the provincial and the federal government together have endowed the temple committee with the power to perpetuate its own version of the shrine's history and rituals. Its rhetoric is marked by adjectives such as "proper" and "real" and follows a certain regulative norm that refrains from crudely direct inclusion or exclusion of certain elements. It still manages, however, to establish a certain normative ideal of the Hinglaj tradition by linking itself to the notions of enlightenment and progress. Many practices and narratives are often not directly forbidden, but are organized in a hierarchical order in which the HSM's own interpretation is planted squarely at the top. As one HSM associate put it, "all arrive, but it is a difference of the class one is traveling in."

As the main organizational body in charge, the HSM has for many years been overseeing the renovation of temples, the building of bridges, and the construction of community places inside the valley. These infrastructural undertakings empower the temple committee to foreground its own interpretations of what is important and worthy to be refurbished inside the valley. This further influences narratives and practices at Hinglaj. Armed with notions of "proper" and "actual" worship, the HSM emphasizes its own particular understanding of the sacred valley and often manipulates or ignores other conflicting interpretations of the tradition.

One of the most significant measures undertaken by the temple committee was the renovation of the Hinglaj temple structure and, in particular, the remodeling of the Goddess's image. While older pictures of this *sanctum sanctorum* show that the inner part of the temple resembled the shape of a saintly figure's grave, hence potentially supporting Zikri Muslim religious imaginaries at the shrine, the HSM countered this impression with the tiling of the temple's inside. This renovation—intentionally or unintentionally—foregrounds one particular religious narrative: the story of the Goddess Satī's dismembering and the dissemination of her body parts over the South Asian continent. Because the Zikris consider Hinglaj to be the grave of one of Prophet Mohammad's family members, the HSM's choice of renovation enhances the visibility of Hindu religious imaginaries at the shrine. But the temple committee's actions in concealing tangible traces of Zikri Muslim religious markers are not only parts in a process of "Hinduization" but also represent steps in a process of (Lasi) "Lohanaization" as they literally set in stone a particular parochial interpretation of Hinglaj and the beliefs and practices of her followers. This is a paradigmatic example of attempts that aim to solidify a certain truth-claim as universal through the systematic exclusion of its contesting elements.

Another example of a solidifying practice is the denial of animal sacrifices (Hin. *bali*) at the shrine. The case study shows how the solidification of tradition is not a top-to-bottom endeavor but rather the outcome of a negotiation process between crowd, landscape, and institution. Undoubtedly, a long controversy exists regarding the affirmation or rejection of blood rituals. In the case of Hinglaj, however, it is apparent that this denial of *bali* has become an important marker of the shrine's reputation in the past decade alone. Functional yet ultimately contingent events prompted the ban inside the valley. But once the temple committee adopted and enforced the prohibition, this debarment was retroactively established as a typical (read: natural) characteristic of worship at the shrine, clashing with other interpretations of the practice, such as the Devipujak-Vagrī's cosmology. This example shows that the solidification of the Hinglaj tradition is not (only) the work of omnipotent actors and institutions but rather the outcome of a set of regulating norms, which are products of, but also producing, the engagement of various communities interacting with each other at the shrine.

This work portrays Hindu thought and practice in Pakistan through the lens of one particular religious site. It offers just a brief glimpse into the Pakistani-Hindu community's current situation and therefore, needs to leave broader questions unanswered. Because of the shrine's central role, however, its examination offers meaningful insights into group formation and the Hindu body's relationship to the nation state. Future research needs to build

upon these foundations by investigating the impact of recent political changes for Hindus in the Islamic Republic. I hope that this work triggers additional research that addresses the widely unstudied field of Hindu rituals and religious imaginaries in Pakistan. Finally, future scholarship should examine the topic of Hindu political and economic engagement, particularly in the Sindh province. The surge of interest that I have already encountered during my research at Hinglaj gives hope that this relatively new research topic will gain further momentum in the future. I, furthermore, wish that other such studies into the rich cultural landscape of Pakistan will give the Islamic Republic a place within South Asian studies beyond the dominant narratives of a failed state, ethnic violence, and terror.

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